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STARBURST

WE TALK TO DIRECTOR
JOE DANTE ON
GREMLINS
THE FILM SENSATION
OF THE YEAR

PLUS

INTERVIEWS WITH

GIORGIO MORODER
ON THE NEW VERSION OF
METROPOLIS

AND

STEVE BARRON
DIRECTOR OF
ELECTRIC DREAMS





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Editor:

Alan McKenzie

Assistant Editor:

Roger P. Birchall

Designer:

Steve Cook

Production:

Tim Hampson

Colour:

Cheamworth Ltd

Typesetting:

Type Generation

Distribution:

Comag

Financial Controller:

James Sclater

Advertising:

Sally Benson

Publisher:

Stan Lee

Writers this issue:

John Brosnan

Chris Charles

Tony Crawley

Barry Forshaw

Sally Gary

Richard Holliss

Alan Jones

Jean-Marc Lofficier

Randy Lofficier

Frances Lynn

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**Joe Dante directs Hoyt Axton and Gizmo in
 GREMLINS**

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This issue Starburst talks to Joe Dante, director of popular films *Piranha*, *The Howling* and the soon-to-be-released *Gremlins*. Dante is very much a film fan himself as the many in-jokes and references to the genre in his work reveal.

Piranha was as much a light-hearted tribute to Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* as it was an intended cash-in. *The Howling*, as well as being an effective werewolf thriller, proved to be a trivia-buff's delight (characters named after horror film directors, guest appearances by film producer Roger Corman and *Famous Monsters of Filmland* editor Forrest J Ackerman, etc.). Starburst readers will be happy to hear *Gremlins* also contains its fair share of in-jokes.

Despite Steven Spielberg's name being prominent in the advertising of *Gremlins* (for obvious commercial reasons) it has the style of a typical Dante film. Obviously Spielberg has kept to the role of Executive Producer, and so not had the amount of creative input he exercised on Tobe Hooper's *Poltergeist*, and left Dante solely to the direction.

Dante uses the Spielberg connection for many of *Gremlins*' hidden film references. Look out for the film titles on the hoarding outside a cinema shown during the opening credits, and spot Spielberg making a guest appearance in one scene along with composer Jerry Goldsmith! The humour in *Gremlins*, despite being quite dark in some parts, comes from the makers' love of films and their under-

• OPINION •



Merry Christmas to
STARBURST
and its readers —
Joe Dante

Above: *Gremlins* star, Zach Galligan, prepares to bat a beastie. Left: Seasonal greetings from *Gremlins* director, Joe Dante.

standing of what similar minded audiences will appreciate.

The other BIG fantasy film to be released this Christmas (as if you didn't know after our mammoth coverage last issue) is *Ghostbusters*. Totally different in both style and humour to *Gremlins* I think it will be the more commercial of the two (of course the box-office takings for *Gremlins* in this country probably won't be helped by the film's '15' certificate). *Ghostbusters* seemed to me to be a shallow type of typical Hollywood manufactured comedy, whereas *Gremlins* with its quirky humour stands up better to repeated viewings. So in my opinion if you plan to see anything at the cinema this Christmas, instead of staying at home with the video recorder, see *Gremlins* — at least twice!

This is the last issue of Starburst to be edited by Alan McKenzie. Ever since issue 4, when its production was first taken over by Marvel Comics, Alan has been involved with Starburst and has edited the magazine since issue 20. Long-time readers will appreciate just how much Starburst has developed since the early issues and, under the editorship of Mr McKenzie has evolved into the top-selling British fantasy media magazine you now hold. After giving his best for Starburst over the years Alan has now decided the time is right to move onto something new. All the Starburst staff wish him the very best in all his future projects.

Roger P. Birchall
(Assistant Editor)

• LETTERS •

V FOR VICTORY

I very much enjoyed your recent coverage of Ken Johnson's *V* mini-series which well made up for its earlier absence in your magazine. It was nice to know that other people enjoyed it as much as I, although I found Bob Shaw's critical review rather negative for my liking. Okay, so *V* did have its faults but then you're going to find them in the best of things if you only look hard enough. It seemed obvious from the start that Mr Shaw had decided to pick holes and totally ignore the positive and entertaining aspect of this series – which I felt was a shame! Having said this however I agree with Richard Holliss concerning the idea of a long running *V* saga. The brilliant *Planet of the Apes* fizzled out due to this and I only hope that the same mistake will not befall *V*. A repeat of the original would be nice, though!



Finally, on reading Richard Holliss' *V* Zone feature on puppet animation I was reminded of another little-mentioned series that acquired Saturday morning status a couple of years back. Entitled *Star Fleet* it concerned a group of freedom fighters whose mission it was to protect a celestial princess from the proverbial baddies of the universe – until a year had run its course. At this point she was meant to transform chrysalis-like into a universal power directed towards the side of good (similar to the White Guardian in *Doctor Who*). What I felt set this series aside from all the others was that it contained one long storyline (albeit with deviations along



Above: *Planet of the Apes* TV stars, James Naughton as Pete Burke, Roddy McDowell as Galen and Ron Harper as Alan Viridon, with characters from the episode entitled *The Liberator*. Below: Ape-face Roddy McDowell.

the way) which eventually concluded – so much more refreshing than those that simply fade into obscurity after a couple of seasons. The producers were also bold enough to "kill off" one of the puppet characters during the course of the series (Dr Benn), giving it that extra edge. Perhaps you may consider featuring *Star Fleet* in a future edition of *TV Zone*.

Nicholas Randell,
East Harling, Norwich.

shows over the years, eg, *The Champions*, *Planet of the Apes*, *Quatermass*, *Outer Limits*, *Time Tunnel*, *Lost In Space*, *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*; the list is almost endless, but then why don't they ever repeat them?

Surely the demand for re-showings must be great (perhaps anyone reading this could drop the appropriate people a line...) after all, the TV stations are there to serve us or do they just like to cater

for "the more intelligent" type of viewer?

I really do think it's dreadful the way that both sides have cast aside us vintage fantasy lovers like an old Tribble!

I would be most grateful if you could print my full address, so anyone else who feels the same way can get in touch.

John Hadlow,
54 Egremont Road,
Exmouth, Devon EX8 1SA.

VINTAGE TV

As one of your younger generation of readers, I thought you may be interested in hearing my views...

I would like to concentrate on the subject of *SF/Fantasy* on TV. At present we are doing quite well, what with home-grown series such as *Tripods* and *Invisible Man* gracing our screens, as well the current re-runs of *Trek* and *Invaders* the *SF* fan should have very little to complain about...

But there is one question that has been bothering me for some time now and I wondered if any other reader could help...

Both major channels have screened some really classic



KING ON FILM

Let's talk about movies. Let's talk about how sometimes they fail to live up to expectations. In short, let's talk about that dreaded word – BLANDNESS. We have no finer examples of cinematic blandness than the recent spate of Stephen King adaptation movies, which all stand as monuments to this word.

Lewis Teague's film *Cujo* is without doubt the dullest film I have ever had the misfortune to sit through in the cinema, it fails on every conceivable level. To be perfectly frank I've sat through more interesting American TV movies. Likewise Carpenter's *Christine* and Cronenberg's *The Dead Zone*, while not plummeting to the depths of a *Cujo* seem to miss the whole point. These talented directors seemed to have failed to grasp the realisation that it takes more than just character names and events from the novel to create cinematic believability. *Cujo* had everything the novel had except the heart and soul. Surely the writers and directors realise that it's not what King writes about, but HOW he writes that makes his novels such rewarding experiences. Presumably they took the time to read the novels first. Cronenberg's film of *The Dead Zone* is especially disappointing after *Videodrome*, the reason is that it's simply bland. And just why King fans and the main-stream critics disliked *The Shining* so much is a complete mystery, and is vaguely disturbing. Are we to believe that all King fans want is a carbon-copy of the particular novel on screen? It's a similar situation as when disgusted Harrison Ford fans stomped out of *Blade Runner*. Are we to

assume that all that is offered is the 2D stereo-typing offered in the atrocious *Cujo*?

If movies like *The Shining* are criticised because they don't choose to copy every event in the novel, are we to assume that this would improve them? What we need (and what I need to stop me cracking up) is the intelligence which is evident in *Carrie* or *The Shining*. What we don't need is the TV depth, the lack of imagination and the blandness of *Cujo* or *Christine*.

Nicholas Hill,
Nunthorpe, Cleveland.

Talking of bland Stephen King film adaptations, you didn't mention Firestarter (a real non-starter). Tobe Hooper's TV movie, Salem's Lot, was pretty good though. But as for Children of the Corn...

KING CORN

I have read the Stephen King short story in *Night Shift* of *Children of the Corn* and found it to be very enjoyable and exceedingly chilling.

I recently saw the adaptation of *Children of the Corn* as a film and was disappointed by the ludicrous and dragged-out attempt to produce a feature-length film from King's original idea. The movie consisted of pathetic acting endeavors from children, blood oozed from every scene and the story lacked strong planning.

Observing the film *Children of the Corn* I cannot criticize on the setting as the maze of endless corn fields proved to be a promisingly frightening site. The music was haunting and supported the film by its excellent tune.

After seeing *Children of the Corn* I am left hoping that the



Above: Heere's Jack (Nicholson) in Stanley Kubrick's film adaptation of *The Shining*, one the better movies based on a Stephen King novel.

next Stephen King adaptations are not so poor and give credit to his novels.

Ivan Carton,
Woodford Green, Essex.

V FOR VALUELESS

I can't believe that you thought *V* was any good. OK, it was good for a laugh. But as a serious film? No chance. It was very badly (over)acted and the script had me rolling

around the sitting room laughing. OK, the SPFX were good (except for the laser guns, Chris Lloyd can serve faster than they travelled). In fact, the state of television at the moment is very bad indeed, only *The Glory Boys* and *Danger Man* and *Callan* have been worth watching, and notice these are all British series.

John Rutter,
Bunbury, Cheshire.

FLICKERS by Tim Quinn & Dicky Howett

EDWARD P. SLOTH, Film Critic at large.....

FROM A SLOW START, THE FILM PROGRESSES SLUGGISHLY THROUGH A TEDIOUS ILLTHOUGHT OUT SCREENPLAY....

ALTHOUGH THE USE OF JUVENILES ON FILM HAS BEEN THE 'IN' THING SINCE SPIELBERG'S *CE4K*, THIS TIME IT DOESN'T COME OFF...

WHEN THE ACTION FINALLY COMES, IT IS BADLY HANDLED BY INEPT STUNTMEN, AND THE COMEDY ELEMENT IS PURE SLAPSTICK IN THE ROGER MOORE TRADITION...

PURPORTING TO BE A HOMILY ON A DAY IN THE LIFE OF BEN AND JACK, THE FILM IS BOTH NAIVE AND PRETENTIOUS. THE CAMERAWORK SHODDY AND AMATEURISH. AT 5 MINUTES, THE FILM OVERUNS BY ITS LENGTH...

THAT'S THE LAST TIME WE INVITE HIM TO SEE OUR HOME MOVIES.

Tony Crawley's • THINGS TO COME •

Best news this month — *Mad Max III* is in the can! (If you're American, that should read: *Road Warrior II* in the can. If you're Turkish, I'm afraid you're on your own . . .) Mel Gibson is once again Rockatansky. Keeping in tune with her recent comeback single, which contained the line, "I've been taking on a new direction," the First Lady of Soul, Tina Turner, is Mel's female lead.



Max III started shooting around Sydney's Blue Mountain area on 10th September, with two directors, as previously reported way back in *Starburst* 62. George Miller looked after the rough stuff with George Ogilvie responsible for the acting performances. Long, tall, gangling Bruce Spence is also back as the Gyro Captain. Newcomers in the cast include local girl Helen Buday and Australia's Shakespearean actor Frank Thring. I presume he's the campy villain.

HOME GROWN

Despite all the Hollywood rumours, after *The Twilight Zone*, that *Max III* would be financed by either Lucasfilm or Amblin, George Miller's own Miller-Kennedy combine is backing the new sequel on its own. The budget, incidentally, is close to quadruple that of *Max II*, but it's been a good year for Miller-Kennedy what with tv work on *The Dismissal* and *Bodyline*.

There would appear to be some Spielberg influences in the new script by the old firm of Miller and Terry Hayes, though. Max is, apparently, in charge of a wild tribe of feral kids, this time around, not just Emil Minty. Can't be sure, though, as the entire project is shrouded in considerable secrecy which we're expecting our very own Phil Edwards to break through any day now.

ELLIOTT GOES WALKABOUT

A month after *Max III* got rolling, young Elliott arrived down-under. Henry Thomas. E.T.'s mate, is not one of Miller's feral kids, though. For his third film since becoming the world's most recognised kid, Henry is taking his on-set schoolteacher to the Victorian Mountains for Russell Hagg's *Frog Dreaming*. All about this kid searching the mountains for a dragon-like creature, called a Donkagin, of Aboriginal legend.

CANCELLED!

Not all down-under films have been as lucky as *Max II*, *Frog Dreaming* and 2084 . . . Another project from Razorback scripster Everett de Roche, *Fortress*, has been cancelled because the Crawford Produc-

tions company was refused permission to have Bess Armstrong, from *Jaws 3-D*, in the main role. The *Equity* line was that it's an Australian movie and shouldn't be cast by — or for — American tv interests. Doubt if the rest of the local actors cast would necessarily agree now that they're out of work. *Equity*, the world over, often does more harm than good.

LARRY'S TRIO

It's taken George Miller five years to make his three *Maxes*. Larry Cohen, however, has made three films this year alone! His sf item about some very odd desserts, *The Stuff* — with his Q star Michael Moriarty — completes a hectic trio, which began with *Liquid Sky* find Anne Carlisle up a *Blind Alley* in New York, and a thriller called *Special Effects* which must be rather unique in that it features no SPFX at all! And Larry's probably as sorry about that as the rest of us, as he likes to keep his SPFX gizmos at home in L.A. (He still has Rick Baker's babies from the *It's Alive* movies.)

Plenty of effects in *The Stuff* though. David Allen is supplying — stop-motion work and Steve Neill and Rick Stratton did all the make-up work. That also explains a heftier budget than usual for Cohen but as he usually winds up owning all the tv deals, he knows he's into profit before he starts work. Corman's old shop, New World, will be releasing *The Stuff* — another departure, for Cohen, who tends to shoot first and sell the film to distribution outlets afterwards. He likes it fine at New World, though. He's told them he'd be happy making two films a year for them. Or three?



Top left: Hopefully tough guy Max Rockatansky (Mel Gibson) will have recovered from the batterings he received as *The Road Warrior* to be fighting fit for *Mad Max III*. Above: *Mad Maxes* director, George Miller.



Sybil Danning, dressed to encourage wolf whistles, in *Howling II* directed by Philippe Mora.

HOWLING II

The werewolves are going home... Christopher Lee and Sybil Danning among other long-snouted, sharp-fanged furry creatures of the night have been shooting the Gerry Brandner-Robert Sarno script of *Howling II* in, of all places, Prague. The Czech public *must* have been surprised! Due for EMI release here, the movie is a co-production of our Hemdale combine and Romero's usual backers, United Film Production. Philippe (Mad Dog) Mora directs the cast which also includes Annie McEnroe and Marsha Hunt. No Dee Wallace? Then I'm not going!

HITCH RETRO

New York has caught the Paris bug. Hitchcockmania! Following an inaugural run in San Francisco, a massive Hitch retrospective – not as “complete” as claimed – opens at the Regency Theatre in mid-January for ten weeks. Eight companies are involved in the tribute, which includes both versions of *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934/1955) and all three Daphne Du Maurier pieces: his farewell to Britain, *Jamaica Inn* (1939); his Hollywood debut, *Rebecca* (1940); and, naturally, *The Birds* (1963). That last one is among Universal's collection of 14 Hitchcocks and could signal the reissue of these extra nine in a similar fashion to the return of the “missing five”. If so, *Psycho* (1960) would head that list, plus room for his final films, *Frenzy* (1972) and *Family Plot* (1976).

A more crucial question about this whole business is what

happens to the black-white originals. Doubtless they'll disappear just like the Looney Tunes and Betty Boop cartoons which went through a colour bath system some years back. 1984 is here, people. Hollywood is rewriting its own history... unless you flick your buttons and turn the colourisation way down until you've a mono picture again!

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“I was offended by being called a science fiction writer because they get paid so much less than so-called mainstream writers! They're in a self-imposed ghetto. They do not seem

to mind being stuck in one corner of the book store like... Astrology. I think the writers have maintained that ghetto more than the critics. I agree with the critic who called me a writer who believes in democracy.” – Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. So it goes.

HOW MANY?

One film missing from the American homage is *Torn Curtain* (1960). With reason. No good reminding people how this one was hyped as Hitch's 50th movie when the alleged “complete retro” numbers 39 films only. Anyway, it wasn't his 50th film; *North By Northwest* (1959) was, *Torn Curtain* was his 54th and his finale, therefore, *Family Plot* was No. 56 – counting, that is, as most filmographies don't, *Bon Voyage* and *Adventure Malgache* (both 1944), two wartime shorts made for the Ministry of Information and, more important, the feature he made twice. No, not *The Man Who Knew Too Much* double but his British thriller, *Murder* (1930). He directed two versions with two casts – one English, the other German. The films even had two names: *Murder in the UK*, *Mary* in Germany. (Discount the propaganda shorts and his 50th feature was *The Birds*, by the way; with an overall total of 54 feature films).

If eight U.S. film companies can come up only with 39 examples of a 54/56 film career, what's happened to the other fifteen features? Warner Brothers have five that I know of, and steered clear of this retro. That still leaves ten missing Hitchcocks...



Alfred Hitchcock gets to grips with Kim Novak on the set of *Vertigo*. A retrospective of the director's work is to be screened in New York.

COLOUR ZONE

Hollywood's latest fad is Colorisation. That's also the name of the (Canadian) company feeding the fad. It's awful and I don't just mean the spelling. The company is part of the not inconsiderable empire of Laurel and Hardy's silent-years producer, Hal Roach. To show how well the system works, Hal had the Toronto folk colourise his 1937 mono movie, *Topper*, with Cary Grant and Roland Young. MGM/UA was so smitten with the result, it has booked the combine to turn various of its black-white classics – even TV series – into colour. I've not seen the work myself, but I presume it's a colour that would work more on tv than back in cinemas. Now I hear much the same terrible fate is befalling a bunch of *Twilight Zone* episodes to "celebrate" the series' silver anniversary in 1985. So much for Rod's line about "It is the middle ground between light and shadow..." The series was good because it was shot in and meant to be seen in black-white, no matter what some guys in suits at telexecutive level may think.

DARK ZONE

He's not a one-man Charlie Band, anymore... The Hollywood producer of sf B movies like *Metalstorm* has formed an association with Palan Productions in order to make three films, including two first slated for his own Empire International. Palan's \$10 million is finally helping to get David Allen's stop-motion project, *Primevals*, off the ground – plus *Journey Through The Dark Zone*, originally intended as a massive 3D and SPFX number last year with the *Metalstorm* star, Jeffrey Byron. Charlie's third film is his insurance, *Laserblast II* is a sequel to his 1978 quasi-sf thriller, a good seller on cassette since then.



A strange character from *Laserblast*, produced by Charles Band who is to make *Primevals*, *Journey Through The Dark Zone* and *Laserblast II*.



Above: *Santa Claus The Movie* producers, Ilya Salkind and Pierre Spengler, on their elf's workshop set. Below: John Lithgow.

SANTA CALLS

Bulky Hollywood character actor David Huddleston has the title role in the Salkinds' *Santa Claus* film. Dudley Moore is still in the action as one of Santa's elves. Both of them are likely to be thoroughly out-acted by John Lithgow – George Miller's navy air-passenger in *Twilight Zone* and the wondrous villain in *Buckaroo Banzai's* life.



3-D COMPUTA-NIMATION

Britain's veteran animation star, John Halas, has seen the future – and it's called *Lucasfilm*. Actually, it's called *The Adventures of Andre and Wally B* – the

first 3-D computer-animation film out of *Lucasfilm*. It was unveiled at the fifth Canadian International Animation Festival in Toronto. The festivalers saw it – and applauded it – twice. How long before we get our chance?



MIRACLE WORKERS

Rollerball and Iceman producer Norman Jewison is joining Hollywood's crowd of remakers. He's made a deal with Richard Pryor to headline an '85 version of H. G. Wells' book and 1936 Alexander Korda movie. The Man Who Could Work Miracles. Regular readers well know my antipathy towards retreads, and given the flop of The Toy I would've thought Pryor was against them. too

GLOBE'S GENRE

New Zealand's entry into the horror game, *Death Warm'd Up*, unfortunately tends to match its title. A grave disappointment considering director David Blyth's succession with his *Angel Mine* movie. This one looks good but is acted without any spirit and by halftime you know why – the story has disappeared into its own navel. I do like the idea of a cranky doctor turning patients into mutant killers though, in an island clinic called Trans Cranial Applications...

CENSOR'S SWISS ROLE

Funny thing happened to Mark Lester's terrible flick, *Class of 1984*, when it played the Apollo-Cinerama cinema in Zurich. The Swiss police arrested it for "excessive brutality". Yet it had been running in the rest of the land of financial gnomes and numbered bank accounts without any hassle. Well, yes, it was taken to court in Berne – but it

won that time. The film censor's role in Switzerland is divided between the various cantons; each state or county having its own censor laws for films. And in Zurich, which is both a town and a canton, Lester's blood-soaked parable ran foul of the law banning movies "having a brutalising effect, inciting crimes or offences or rendering, contemptuously, in a vile manner, people or groups of people". It certainly did that!

LIGHTS...!

Warren Beatty looks like winding up the old wrist-radio and becoming *Dick Tracy*, after all... He's even more keen to make *Schindler's List* for Spielberg. France still adores Spielberg. *Temple of Doom* smashed *E.T.*'s opening week record by 20,000 – people, that is, not mere francs. Indy will never catch *Romancing The Stone*, the surprise Number One film of the French year... Jim Henson has put his Muppets on stage in America. Statler and Waldorf even do a dance turn...

CAMERAS...!

A big battle is going on behind some angry scenes in Film City about which Hollywood producer really has the rights to Isaac Asimov's *I, Robot* and *The Rest of the Robots* short stories. Once they sort themselves out, a film is promised. If either guy can afford it after the inevitable court wrangle... Stephen Verona, whose publicists claim he was making rock videos before Russell Mulcahy, Steve Barron or Godley and Creme held their first cameras, is returning to features with *Hotel Hell*... Think I've seen it; only then it was called *Hotel New Hampshire*...

& AKK-SHUN!

David Cronenberg has postponed shooting Dan O'Bannon's script of *Total Recall* until March, and then in Rome, not Toronto... 007's Jaws hulk, Richard Kiel, gets a decent break, at last, after those silly Bond rip-offs. He's saddled up for Clint Eastwood's fresh Western, *Pale Rider*. Must be one helluva horse... Jim Henson has bought *Dark Crystal* back from Lord Grade's old combine, ITC, for less than the \$26 million it cost. ITC still makes a mint, by the way, in selling Patrick McGooohan's *Prisoner* and *Dangerman* (US: *Secret Agent*) to local tv stations around America... New York firm behind *Mars In The Eighth House* is called Krypton. With \$20 million to spend, it must know the power of greenstuff...



Warren Beatty as he appeared in his self-directed *Reds*. Rumour has it that he will play *Dick Tracy* after much speculation.

MOVIE DIRECTOR **JOE DANTE** ON **GREMLINS**



by Randy and Jean-Marc Lofficier

Although it could never be said that Joe Dante has spent his career making "art" films, by his own admission, *Gremlins* is the most commercial picture thus far in his career. Filmed under Steven Spielberg's Amblin Productions banner, it is certainly the first of Dante's films to be singled out for the type of massive merchandising campaign that has proved so successful for past Spielberg endeavours, notably *E.T.*.

As we sat talking about *Gremlins*, the film was still going through the final phase of post-production. Its success and audience appeal were an unanswered question. *Gremlins* was scheduled to open on June 8, at the same time as three other eagerly awaited productions, all aimed at a similar market. Whether this eccentric fairy tale would be able to beat out *Streets of Fire*, *Ghostbusters* and *Top Secret* for the big, opening day box-office was a problem to be decided in the future.

Dante, in his characteristic manner, punctuated our conversation with wry comments and laughter. His major regret over the long months spent working on *Gremlins*, was the fact that he saw fewer movies during its production than at any other time in his life.

Starburst: Has the *Gremlins* story changed much from the original script?

JOE DANTE: Yes. Originally, it was written on spec by Chris Columbus, who was about twenty years old at the time. It was a little more of a standard horror movie. All the *Gremlins* turned into monsters, including Gizmo. In fact, there was no Gizmo. Basically, all they did was eat people. That was their main modus operandi. They were hungry all the time. There was a scene in a McDonald's where everyone is eaten, except the McDonald's burgers. There were people lying on the tables with pieces missing from them, but the burgers were untouched, because the *Gremlins* wouldn't eat them. McDonald's wouldn't go for that! Also it was a little more gruesome than we wanted.

We tried to make it a little less gruesome and more of a fun picture. It's not a serious picture. It has things in it that are sort of interesting sub-texts. Also, it's not the world's most logical plot, so to



Opposite: Frances Lee McCain stalks the Gremlins hiding in her family's suburban home. Above: The Gremlins go carol singing. Left: Cute little Gizmo becomes a victim of the evil Gremlins misbehaviour. Below: The Gremlins pay a riotous visit to the local cinema.





► treat it with any degree of gravity probably wouldn't have helped people watching it.

How did you go about making it more logical?

Well, for a while, we were seduced into trying to account for every odd little plot point. For instance, it used to bother me that the Gremlins could go out in the snow — the movie takes place at Christmas — and yet, not be affected by the water. So, we wrote in a plot point that they became affected only when the water was above a certain temperature, and we dutifully put that into the film. But, then, when we went to cut it, we realized that none of those things were really very important, as long as there was an internal logic that we were operating with.

It all would make a certain kind of sense, because the whole tone of the project is kind of like a fairy tale. So, we hedge on a number of things, such as

the rules that the Chinese kid gives to the father. He says, "don't do this, this and this." We said, "That's kind of arbitrary isn't it? He just made these up and why does this guy believe this? Why does he take this seriously?" So, we did a lot of hedging voice-overs, where the father would explain the rules to his family, and he would say, "Well, it sounds silly to me, but maybe we should listen to these people."

As we started to dub the picture, we looked at all this material, and we realized that the force of the movie comes from the fact that these are a certain set of "givens" that are like a fairy tale. You have to believe them in order for the story to make sense. We were robbing ourselves of the conviction of the story, by making fun of them, or even suggesting that there might be something odd about them. So, now the picture is just out there. It's take it or leave it. You either like this story or you don't. And, if

you don't, then you can find a lot of things wrong with it. But, if you do, everything does make sense in its own, scatterbrained way.

What special effects are there other than the little creatures?

The little creatures are the special effects, but they're in so many scenes, that it really ended up being a big deal. We shot them in two parts, one with the live action and one with just the effects, and the effects ended up taking as long, or longer, than the principle photography.

There was one stop motion shot — when I first read the script, I thought that the whole thing had to be done in stop motion — in which case we would still be shooting two years from now, because there was so much of it. But, as it turned out, by planning it down to the wire, we found a way to do most of what was in the script without having to compromise too much. There were still some things





Opposite page: Gizmo discovers the joys of suburban life at home with Billy (Zach Galligan). Left: Stripe, leader of the Gremlins. Centre: Billy bandages the injured Gizmo. Below: A miserable Mogwai.

that we just couldn't do. There's a limit to how clever you can be in hiding things. There were so many people on the set controlling cables from all these various special effects, that it was literally impossible to walk! It's a tribute to the movie that the actors aren't stumbling all over the place, because underneath every frame, there's something like five people that they have to step over in order to get anywhere. It's the hardest picture I ever made.

I imagine the Gremlins were too small to put people inside costumes?

No, we couldn't do that. We originally "talked" to some monkeys about being in the picture. A guy came over and brought a tree monkey, and we thought that maybe we could put one in a suit. Anyway, this monkey proceeded to run about the office, leave little monkey deposits everywhere, and didn't look like the most controllable kind of actor. Also, Steven had told me a story about



trying to use monkeys for aliens in *Close Encounters*, and all the monkeys did was to rip off their alien costumes, run all over the set and throw things at the crew. So, it just wouldn't have worked. Besides, the specifics of what they had to do were too complex. It was hard enough for people to do them, let alone asking some animal.

What were some of the fun things with doing this picture?

The cast was great, I had fun working with them. People have said that one of the best things about the picture is the casting, which was done by Susan Arnold.

Keye Luke is in the picture, and getting to meet him and hear his stories... He's eighty years old and looks fifty. He remembers all the aphorisms from his old Charlie Chan movies, and will spout them at the drop of a hat. Things like, "May your shadow always fall in ►"





Right: Gizmo watches *Gremlins* in 3D. Below: Time for bed for Billy and Gizmo. Opposite page: Kate (Phoebe Cates) and Billy (Zach Galligan) at work in the local bank, and later discovering the damage done by the Gremlins at the high school.

► pleasant places." He's just a charming, wonderful guy, playing a role which will not exactly advance the Chinese race. But, it's a fairy tale. It's an affectionate stereotype, still, it is nonetheless the kind of portrayal of Chinese people that probably went out in 1940.

But, it's all germane to the plot, because at the beginning of the picture, you really don't know where Chinatown is. You don't know if it's out of the country, in the country or what it is. It's sort of a state of mind, as opposed to a real place.

You're one of the few people, if not the only one, that has ever had the opportunity to direct Steven Spielberg in a scene. . .

This is true. Steven worked on the same day as Robbie the Robot and Bob Burns

who owns the original Time Machine. It takes place at an inventors' convention, and we used these as inventions that are going on in the background. Steven had broken his foot, which was in a cast, and which lent a properly odd tone to the thing. He drives around with his electric car, covering up the actor's dialogue.

We did a joke in the background where we cut back to the Time Machine, which isn't there anymore. This guy who has been sitting in it has obviously been vaporized away somewhere. Everytime I would shoot it over, Steven would say, "No, no! Have the guy who owns it be more upset!" It's a background joke, it's not supposed to be that obvious. Finally, I did a take where this guy that has lost the Time Machine is throwing his briefcase up in the air and pounding the floor.

Steven said, "Well, maybe that one is too much."

That was the only time he visited the set, really. He was there one other day and he tried to coax me into some other piece of outrageous directing, but I had none of it. No, directing Steven was fine. He didn't ask for any.

You had Jerry Goldsmith to write the music as well. . .

Jerry Goldsmith is *in* that scene, and he complains that I didn't direct him much, and he's right. It didn't occur to me until the last time I looked at the scene, and I noticed that he's looking at the camera throughout. Nonetheless, it's his big moment.

How long have you been working on the film?

I've been working on this forever! I could



have made twenty Roger Corman movies in the time it took to make this one. I was doing pre-production and storyboards on *Gremlins* while we were making *Twilight Zone*, which is something I'm never going to do again. Then, when *Twilight Zone* was almost finished, everyone left and went off to do their own things. Only Frank Marshall and I were left to put it together, shoot the new ending, etc. . . All the while, Mike Fennell was saying, "What are you doing? We've got to work on *Gremlins*!" And, at that time, we didn't know whether we were going to shoot it on location or here, or even how we were going to do it. The whole thing stretched into an incredibly long period of time. *Do you think you should have done it in six months?*

No. But I think it would have been a different picture if I had. We ended up with a three and a half hour rough cut. Which is an awful lot of film. That partly happens because you just spend so much time working on the picture. You sit around so much on a special effects picture, that you start to think, "We ought to be doing something with this scene. We ought to be embellishing it somehow." And by the time you're through embellishing it, you've got an hour of embellishments!

Do you feel pleased with the film?

I have no idea. I'm probably the worst person to ask. I'm pleased that certain problems I saw in it have been overcome. I'm not pleased that others haven't. I will be pleased if people like it. I wouldn't say it's the least personal movie that I've ever made, although it started out to be true at the beginning. But, it didn't end up that way. It is, however, the most "commercial" movie I've ever made, and this is coming from someone that used to work for Roger Corman! Those movies were entirely commercial, and therefore, anything you did in between were entirely your own. With this picture it's a little different. There's a lot of money riding on it, and there is a pressure to try and make something that you think people will like. But, in the end, all I can do is try to make something that I think I'll like. Within the boundaries set for me by the project.

You've been working on this film for such a long time, and have been so close to it, aren't you afraid that that may have affected the final outcome?

I was afraid that was true until I started showing it to people. For instance, I showed to Steven, who hadn't even looked at the dailies. He pronounced it my greatest work. I said, "But is it any good?" He seems to be pleased with it. I think one thing that pleases him, is that although this is the kind of picture that he likes, it's not made the way that he would make it. Therefore, I don't think he feels that he's going to be accused of repeating himself, in the sense that he's gone off and taken a bunch of commercial elements from his previous pictures and thrown them all together in a similar manner.



The thing that originally attracted him to this, I think, was the tone of the script, which, even in its most horrific early draft, was always sort of whimsical and eccentric. That's been preserved and even enlarged upon. It's also takes place in his favourite venue, a small town. It's got kids, it's got families, it's got dogs, it's got people who are not from Earth. It's got everything that he likes.

Speaking of people not being from Earth. Did you ever come up with an explanation of where the Gremlins came from?

We have a lot of interesting ideas that we used ourselves, as to where they came from. George Gipe, who wrote the novelization, has invented an entire background on where these things come from and what they are. Although I don't

totally subscribe to that, it's very clever and imaginative. The book has a lot of interior monologues on the parts of the special effects characters, which you can't do in a movie. It sort of gives it an extra dimension.

Everybody has been going around saying that this is "Steven Spielberg's Gremlins." Does that bug you at all?

No. As a matter of fact, I specifically didn't take that credit that they like you to take, that says, "A so and so film." Not because it isn't my movie or anything, but it just isn't something that I'm comfortable with. But, it is Steven Spielberg's *Gremlins*. If it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be making it. It doesn't bother me, because I don't think anybody, once they see this movie, is going to confuse it with the way Steven would do it. ■



PSYCHO

by Paul Anderson

In 1977 the American Film Institute celebrated its tenth anniversary by conducting a poll to select the fifty best American movies of all time. Naturally, to choose the most prestigious films from literally thousands of possible nominations would finally determine an extremely special collection indeed, and hardly surprisingly, Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* was included in the fifty. It would have been more surprising if it hadn't been included, for despite the varying reactions between audiences and the film critics at the time of its release, *Psycho* is unquestionably a classic.

On its initial release the film received, like Michael Powell's contemporary *Peeping Tom*, a severe and vicious attack by the popular press. Hitchcock never realised the immense popularity *Psycho* would enjoy with audiences but he did anticipate the fury it would evoke with the critics.

CONTROVERSY

"People will say it was a terrible film to make." And they certainly did. *Picturegoer* referred to it as "sicko" and added that "for sheer brutality it's pretty nauseating." Several American newspapers found it "evil", "disgustingly sick" and "absolutely horrid beyond any redemption". One reviewer even suggested that perhaps Hitchcock should have taken the shower instead of Janet Leigh. *The Monthly Film Bulletin* stated that the movie was "a reprehensible affair" but I congratulate them on their common sense by also adding that "it is a bit late in the day to start moralising about what Hitchcock chooses to do."

Hitchcock casually dismissed the bitter criticisms. "You have to remember that *Psycho* is a film made with quite a sense of amusement on my part. To me it's a fun picture. The process through which we take the audience, you see it's rather like taking them through the haunted house at the fairground..." Such an unrepentant statement, so typical of Hitchcock's dry, macabre sense of humour, seemed to upset the critics even more who thought the master of suspense wasn't taking the controversy as seriously as he should. The

bad publicity naturally piqued the filmgoer's curiosity and *Psycho* became an instant success. So the critics who attacked the film only have themselves to blame for actually helping it to become America's second top moneymaker in the year of its release and Hitchcock's financially most successful production.

Hitchcock never intended the film to be the classic it is today and was primarily conceived as a challenge. The sudden influx of modestly budgeted horror films produced during the late Fifties by companies such as Hammer Films and American International Pictures were grossing extremely healthy profits. Hitchcock's curiosity became aroused by this successful revivification of the dormant horror genre and wanted to satisfy his anxiety and prove that he possessed the calibre to out-do his predecessors. For *Psycho* to remain in the

boundaries of a modest budget the movie was filmed in monochrome and largely by a television production crew.

The inspiration for *Psycho* was derived from the pulp novel of the same title written by Robert Bloch. In 1958 the film rights had been sold to MCA for ninety-five thousand dollars. Hitchcock inquired if Bloch himself could be considered to adapt his novel for the screen, as he found it extremely difficult to imagine anyone else who possessed the macabre sense of humour contained in the book. An agent at MCA felt that a client of the company should be offered the proposition and recommended Joseph Stefano. The choice of Stefano as *Psycho*'s scenarist disturbed Hitchcock, even more so when Stefano himself admitted that he was disappointed by Bloch's novel. But Hitchcock was pleased with Stefano's final draft, and it remained practically unchanged when



shooting began.

Like all of Hitchcock's films *Psycho* is superbly photographed and visually designed with his concentrated supervision that makes him almost as memorable as a cinematographer as well as a director. The use of the camera suggests that we are all voyeurs and cunningly manipulates the audience so that we become unintentionally involved in the film's premise. The very first sequence we see is the camera panning across the rooftops and apartment blocks in Arizona to find the film's heroine. It chooses a building, hesitantly approaches, and enters an open window. Later, after the heroine encounters Norman Bates, the proprietor of the infamous Bates motel, and undresses before taking a shower, Norman secretly peers at her through a small hole in the wall. Moments after, we are peering through the hole. These voyeuristic elements occur quite frequently.



Far left: Norman Bates (Anthony Perkins) is horrified at the sight of a murder he believes to have been committed by his mother. Inset: A gimmicky poster for the initial release of *Psycho*. Left: Janet Leigh looks suitably terrified in this publicity shot. Above: Lila Crane (Vera Miles) and Milton Arbogast (Martin Balsam) check into the Bates Motel. Below: A publicity still reflecting the disturbed character of Norman Bates.



The impact of *Psycho*, I think, can only be appreciated on its initial showing, and when viewing the film for a second or third time the shocks are still so vivid (because they were so memorable to begin with) that they can obviously be anticipated in advance. But watching the tense build up of the shower sequence, or the detective's demise, or the searching of the Bates' mansion, for example, is still an exhilarating experience.

The film's heroine, Marion Crane (Janet Leigh) is the first character Hitchcock intends the audience to feel sympathetic towards. We listen to her conversation with her lover Sam (played by John Gavin, who was incidentally embarrassed to act the scene without wearing his shirt) in a hotel room and learn that because of Sam's lack of money he is unable to marry her. As Marion returns to her office (afficionados of 'Hitchcock spotting' will notice

the director standing outside) temptation is placed directly in front of her in the form of forty thousand dollars and she finds it unable to resist. The theft of the money becomes the main concern as she attempts to escape by car to join Sam in Fairvale, California. The encounter with the patrolling police officer is a particularly tense scene. It also remains the only sequence in Stefano's script that Hitchcock decided to alter for the final film. Subsequently, Mort Mills who played the patrolman reverted to a suspicious, threatening menace as opposed to Stefano's original flirtatious concept.

Up to this point *Psycho* is deliberately false in its security. The impression would seem to be that it concerns the consequences of a robbery and nothing more. No indication is given of the existence of the horror story about to unwind until it is suddenly sprung. The shower scene and the murder of Marion Crane heralds the gripping tension to come. The robbery element totally disappears and the theft of the money, which was the main concern up to now, becomes trivial.

Naturally, the shower scene takes an unsuspecting audience completely by surprise. Nobody could have anticipated the slaughter of the leading female character, especially in such a savage manner and only half way through the film.

The casting of Marion Crane proved to be Hitchcock's most difficult pre-production problem. Obviously he wanted a leading lady of instant recognition to inject the whole murder with as much unexpected shock for the audience as possible, but the demise of Marion is hardly a fitting one for a Hollywood star and glamorous volunteers were naturally scarce. He eventually decided on Janet Leigh, a familiar actress with fourteen years of movie experience who seemed to suit the part perfectly and additionally proved reasonably affordable.

It took seventy camera set-ups to film the shower scene, and although the finished scene lasts only forty-five seconds it took seven days to complete it. The direction blends with the rapid speed of the editing to deceive the eye into believing the attacks were more severe than they actually were. The chilling music of Bernard Herrmann, composed for and performed by an entirely string orchestra evokes great force throughout the film, especially in the driving segments where his theme co-ordinates with the windscreen wipers and the storm. It is even more impressive in the death scenes when it dramatically changes to shrieking violins and appears to resemble a combination of metallic sounds and screaming. Interestingly, Hitchcock initially wanted to film the whole episode in



silence with no incidental music and only the sound of running water accompanying it, but Herrmann persuaded him to change his mind.

As the dying Marion collapses on the bathroom floor the camera shows a close-up of Janet Leigh's eye. Slowly, it retreats backwards until it reveals the horrified expression of shock depicted on her face. The aftermath of the death, I feel, is the greatest message of the whole occurrence. When the audience has gathered its senses, and later considers the circumstances of the death, the real horror of it is not so much the brutality but the pointlessness of it.

After such a powerful twist to the story Hitchcock's tight manipulation of the audience slackens just a shade and we

are left totally in the dark, clutching at nothing. The only person in *Psycho* to attach ourselves to at this point is Norman Bates, and again our sympathies immediately are with him because he is trapped in such a sudden and vulnerable position. The withdrawn and nervous young man has to suffer the humiliation and anxieties of a dominant and homicidal mother. Panic-stricken, he cleans up the bloody mess in the bathroom like a dutiful son and disposes of Marion's body by dumping it in a nearby swamp; together with the forty thousand dollars, unaware of its existence.

Hitchcock's first choice to portray Norman Bates was Anthony Perkins, despite his dissimilarity to the character's description in the book. Owing Paramount

another film under his contract Perkins was immediately cast, completely unaware of the effect that the role would have on the audiences at that time and subsequently on his future career. It is still his most famous role even after twenty-four years. More surprisingly, Perkins didn't actually "stab Janet Leigh to death" as he was appearing in a stage play at the time of the filming and his stand-in obliged the disguise. "I was hundreds of miles away at the time", Perkins reminisced, "but I have been held responsible ever since."

GRUESOME

The second death scene, that of Martin Balsam as the probing private investigator Arbogast, is so imminent as the character enters the seemingly deserted mansion that the anticipation of his demise is unnerving. Suspiciously, he ascends the stairs and as he reaches the top, Herrmann's music suddenly reverts to the shrieking violins again as a figure runs from a bedroom and stabs him in the face. He falls backwards down the flight of stairs and, as he collapses at the bottom, the old woman repeatedly stabs him until the scene fades to darkness. The demise of Arbogast was a sequence that Hitchcock didn't direct himself, although again he closely supervised it. When he became ill, his assistant director, Hilton Green (producer of *Psycho II*) took control and completed the scene twice. After the first occasion's shooting



Below left: Norman (Anthony Perkins) lurks on the stairs of the sinister Bates House. Above: In *Psycho II* Norman is released from jail and returns to the Bates House, finding a mysterious silhouette in a window as he arrives. Above right: Norman chats to Marion Crane (Janet Leigh) outside her room at the Bates Motel.

was edited together it formed an impression contrary to the one intended with Martin Balsam resembling the menace rather than the intended victim. The second slaughter is gruesome and expertly handled, although its anticipation never equals the sudden sensationalism of the shower murder.

The re-emergence of Marion's lover, Sam, and the introduction of her sister, Lila (played by Vera Miles, again Hitchcock's first choice) is most obviously to solve the mystery personally.

The most interesting occurrence before the psychiatrist's explanation has to be Lila's search of the Bates' mansion. It builds up a vivid portrait of Norman's dreary and tortured existence. The examination of the house is an examination of Norman. We are shown the bedroom of Norman's mother, kept exactly as it was when he murdered her and her secret lover ten years ago. The bed still bears the embedded impression of her body in the mattress (probably maintained by Norman). Norman's room displays the evidence of the immaturities he still possesses within his adult frame; the cuddly toys, the old recording of the Eroica symphony on the gramophone, etc. Inheritances of his childhood and references to the past he can never obliterate if he is forced to ▶ 21

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maintain the illusion that his mother still exists, and conceals his shame and guilt. These scenes in the Bates' mansion are brilliantly photographed in capturing the past and the sour smell of decay.

The fruit cellar holds the key to the mystery as Lila discovers when she enters the room after nearly colliding with Norman. It is in this room where the whole conclusion of the film is revealed. Indeed, Norman's mother is dead (exposed as a mummified maquette wearing an evil grimace) and has not returned from the dead to haunt her matricidal son. Norman, so guilty of his crime, has attempted to erase it from his mind by convincing himself that she is still alive. The psychiatrist's explanation in the epilogue has been scrutinizingly analysed on numerous occasions and much criticised for ignoring as much as it attempts to explain. One writer commented that it seemed to contain more dialogue than in all of the previous reels combined. Personally, I think it is well constructed, maturely written and serves its purpose. In fact, the speech is so meticulously straight-forward and one feels so convinced by it that perhaps the supposedly fictitious events of *Psycho* could have happened. It appears to plausible under the circumstances.

The original version of *Psycho* lasted for two hours. Paramount, the distributors, begged Hitchcock to shorten the movie and he obligingly re-edited a number of sequences (most notably the patrolman's conversation with Marion) yet carefully ensured that the plot's continuity was not damaged.

CENSORSHIP

Being far ahead of its time *Psycho* naturally experienced a number of censorious problems. Firstly, the use of the word "transvestite" in the closing explanation scene caused an objection until Stefano accentuated that its use was to prove that Norman Bates was not a transvestite. The sight of the mummified corpse was also considered offensive. It was nearly removed from the finished film until doctors authorised its authenticity and claimed it represented an accurate duplication of a decomposing maquette; the censor relented and the seemingly harmless few frames of celluloid were saved. Even the sight of a flushing toilet (used by Marion to dispose of her notes) was regarded as a lack of taste on Hitchcock's part. Ironically, the shower scene remained completely untouched. In the British release prints, however, censor John Trevelyan considered it too sadistic and subsequently reduced the fourteen stabs to three.

When *Psycho* was released in 1960 the impact it created was colossal. Some described it as the most elaborate practical joke ever devised. Hitchcock, Janet Leigh and John L. Russell, who replaced



Hitchcock's regular cinematographer, Robert Burks, were all nominated for Academy Awards. In keeping with the narrow-minded disrespect the Academy's committee show towards horror films in general not one of the categories collected an award. Contrarily, the *New York Times* did select *Psycho* as one of the ten best films of the year and Janet Leigh received The Gol-

den Globe's Award as the best supporting actress.

Psycho spawned many imitations of the "psychological horror", such as Robert Aldrich's *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane* (1962), William Castle's *Homicidal* (1961) and Brian DePalma's intended homage *Dressed to Kill* (1982), to name only a few. Hitchcock, who died in 1980, certainly left a lot to answer for.

Psycho (1960)

Anthony Perkins (as Norman Bates), Janet Leigh (Marion Crane), Vera Miles (Lila Crane), John Gavin (Sam Loomis), Martin Balsam (Milton Arbogast), John McIntire (Sheriff Al Chambers), Simon Oakland (Dr Richman), Vaughn Taylor (George Lowery), Frank Albertson (Cassidy), Lurene Tuttle (Sheriff's wife), Patricia Hitchcock (Carolanne), John Anderson (Car salesman), Mort Mills (Police officer).

Produced and directed by Alfred Hitchcock. Screenplay by Joseph Stefano, based on the novel by Robert Bloch. Photographed by John L. Russell. Art direction by Joseph Hurley and Robert Clatworthy. Music by Bernard Herrmann. Title designer/pictorial consultant Saul Bass. Edited by George Tomasini. Makeup by Jack Barron and Robert Dawn. Special effects by Clarence Champagne. Time: 109 mins.

STEVE BARRON'S ELECTRIC DREAMS

Interview by Frances Lynn

Twenty-seven-year-old Steve Barron's first job was working for Samuelsons, the largest European suppliers of film equipment – culminating in him working on such films as *A Bridge Too Far*, *The Duellists* and *Superman*, the *Movie* as a camera technician. With his sister Siobhan, Steve then set up the now very successful video production company Limelight. Currently, an established pop promo director, he has recently made his feature directorial debut with *Electric Dreams*.

Starburst: Was *Electric Dreams* the first feature you were offered?

Steve Barron: No, I was offered a few other features, and quite a few of them were music orientated – like *Flashdance II*. Then *Electric Dreams* came along which was a much classier script.

Did you have a burning ambition to direct a feature before you had your chance with *Electric Dreams*?

I didn't have any ambition to direct a feature. I only started directing promos when nobody was around to direct a rock video which had come along for Limelight, which my sister and I had just started. That's how I started directing promos, and when *Electric Dreams* came along, I thought it was obviously time I should do a feature, especially as I was getting all these offers to direct. But it never came to a point when I said I'm tired of rock videos. So when *Electric Dreams* came along, I realised it was something I wanted to do just to prove I could do it. If I hadn't accepted it, I would never have known if I could have worked for that concentrated period of time. But I do want to continue making videos, for I find I've learned a lot from the feature and the video scripts I'm now writing are probably going to have more story-line. **What's MGM/UA's campaign in America for *Electric Dreams*? I hear they're shoving it out on the bottom half of a double bill.**

They put it out as a trial release without the album which was a bit silly, they should have waited for the album!

I also heard a rumour that admission prices were drastically reduced in order to entice audiences in.

I haven't heard anything about that, but they (MGM/UA) should have waited for a number of things – the singles to start, the album to be out. No-one had heard one single track on any radio station when the film came out. It was always scheduled for that date, there was a



problem with the album so the album was going to be put back, and it was going to go out four weeks after the film's release, but instead of delaying the film, there was a decision taken of the availability of cinemas because a lot of cinemas wanted it, and they dangled the carrot of 920 cinemas – "here's an opening", and you don't get many openings like that! And there are so many tracks on the album that are good single tracks.

What did YOU think of the final version of *Electric Dreams*?

I'm pleased with it but it's a bit difficult to know. You get so close to working with something after working on it for a year. You're not sure in the end. Your emotions run to different things in the film to what your public probably does on first

time seeing, because you're eventually seeing the film 150/200 times, and no member of the public would ever see it that many times!

How did you work with Rusty Lemorande in his producer capacity? Was he on the set all the time?

Yes, he was, he was around! He's a producer/writer so he's very involved in his own script. He doesn't just hand it over and let you get on with it. He very much wants to be part of it.

Why did you shoot separate videos to help promote *Electric Dreams* rather than using actual footage from the film? One can do it – release actual excerpts from the film – but I don't like that when they do that from a film, when you see cut together footage from the film. You want to see a new concept and we're



Opposite: A posed publicity still featuring the stars of *Electric Dreams*, Virginia Madsen and Leny Von Dohlen. Above: Miles (Von Dohlen) confronts his hostile computer... Below: ...and comes off second best

able to do all the videos from the film as little satellite storylines.

Was it a coincidence that you and your mother (Zelda Barron) were making your feature directorial debuts at the same time? (Zelda directed *Secret Places*, part financed by Virgin).

It was really. After Virgin had agreed to "go" with her project, my sister and I went to a meeting with Richard Branson. Two days earlier I'd read *Electric Dreams* and told Richard what a fabulous idea it was.

Rusty Lemorande must be very grateful to you.

A lot of things then followed. Richard agreed to do it but Rusty got together the whole deal with MGM which helped, because it got most of its money back. (*Electric Dreams'* budget was \$7 mil-

lion.)

*What response have you had since *Electric Dreams'* release?*

Dino de Laurentiis wanted me to do a picture for him starting immediately. It wasn't my sort of thing, a Stephen King script (incidentally director Russell Mulcahy turned the same script down: see our interview on page 24 this issue.)

Why isn't it your sort of film?

It was a lot of blood and gore, and it's not the sort of film I wanted to spend a year on. I don't think I could do a horror film, not for a while anyway. I don't get any enjoyment out of going to the cinema and jumping out of my seat so I can't then translate that to other people. But I've just signed a deal with MGM. A script called *Mannequin*, about a guy who's a window dresser in New York, in

a shop like Bloomingdales, and it's Christmas time. He's got no family in New York, he's very lonely and to cap it all at the end of the office party, he's made to work. At the stroke of midnight, this mannequin comes to life and says I'm your present.

It's sort of a romantic comedy and when she comes alive she's like a little Tinkerbell.

Will there be any music involved?

When the mannequin comes alive she prances up and down like a kid in a candy store, squirting herself with perfume, trying on all the best clothes and dancing up and down the walls. He follows her but as he can't dance he trips up over his own feet. She shows him how to dance and that becomes the Big Production number!

Sphere

The Spores of Doom



Above: Never take magic mushroom soup from a stranger in the woods: the moral of Stephen Hilliker's film. Right: The young heroine of *Sphere*.



Feature by Roger P. Birchall

The term "movie brat" is a familiar one with most *Starburst* readers. One immediately thinks of Steven Spielberg whose career and films, along with those of George Lucas, Francis Coppola and John Milius was covered in the famous book, *The Movie Brats*, by Linda Myles and Mike Pye. The publication examined the trends of contemporary American cinema, rather than, as the title suggests, actual "young" filmmakers. Spielberg is nearly forty, although he is still popularly considered to be the "wunderkind of Hollywood". The new generation of movie brats would probably include the young makers of *The Evil Dead*, director Sam Raimi and producer Robert Tapert; Fred *Basket Case* Henenlotter; and maybe Joel Coen, *Evil Dead* cinematographer and director of a visually slick new thriller called *Blood Simple*. All these guys are American.

Now we at *Starburst* believe we have discovered a new hope to pioneer today's generation of British movie brats. We are very much behind the times in this country as far as young blood in film production is concerned. Veterans like Richard Attenborough and Hugh Hudson still head the British industry with their overrated big budget epics, while ex-commercials directors such as Ridley Scott and his brother Tony have their work virtually ignored by mainstream critics. Compare the amount of hype lavished

on *Gandhi* and *Greystoke* to the general indifference given to *Blade Runner* and *The Hunger*. But what about new British talent? For that we have to look towards the virtual new medium of pop promos for the likes of Julien Temple, Russell Mulcahy (see *Razorback* feature on page 32) and Keith Williams. A new name on the scene is Stephen Hilliker, the 25-year-old director of a video promo for gothick rock group Flesh 4 Lulu.

Hilliker is fresh out of the prestigious National Film and Television School in Beaconsfield. While he was there, on the college's maximum four-year course, he made a 40 minute short entitled *Sphere - The Spores of Doom*. Being a long-time science fiction fan and *Starburst* reader, he sent us a video copy of his film for perusal. With allowances for the difficulties and limitations in producing a project at college, we were pleasantly surprised with his film.

Sphere has the straightforward storyline of an olde English village that is under the control of a traditional Catweazle-like Wizard who keeps the residents in his power by supplying them with addictive "magic" mushrooms. The tale follows a little girl named Anna who moves into the village with her grandparents, much to the annoyance of the locals (particularly the Preacher, played by British character actor John Collin), who aren't partial to "outsiders". The child en-



Top: A gruesome make-up effect from *Sphere*, after Anna has fallen from a horse. Above: A Village Idiots Convention! Or extras from Hilliker's film in period costume. Left: Setting up a camera shot on a remote location. Below left: The Catweazle-like Wizard of *Sphere*.



counters the Wizard in Toadstool Wood, and is charmed into drinking his magic mushroom potion, and then realises she will never be able to leave the village. Some years later a young stabledad, Dunstan, himself new to the area, asks Anna to come away with him. When she refuses he becomes determined to find out the terrible truth about the village, and confronts the mysterious Wizard on Windmill Hill in a special effects laden climax.

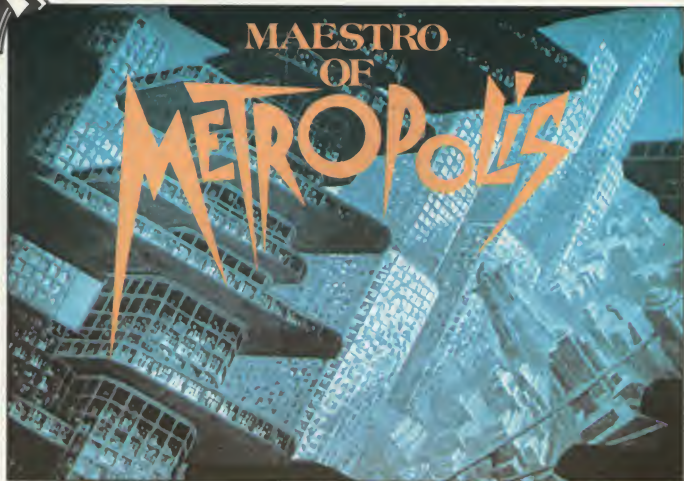
Despite such a basically simple plot, *Sphere* is a tour de force of technical invention. Hilliker employs every visual trick from zooms and tracking shots to coloured (predominantly blue) filters and strobe lighting (for a horse-riding scene) to great effect. The colour and, particularly, the sound are impressive, and Dennis Crossan's photography is also magnificent. Obviously a Ridley Scott fan, Hilliker has one shot in *Sphere* of a clenched, rain-drenched fist bathed in strong blue light à la *Blade Runner* ("One of my favourite films," he told *Starburst*).

After extensive story-boarding, the film took six weeks to shoot on location in wooded Hemel Hempstead, Brill and, for a scene on a rocky beach, on the rugged shores of Ex-

moor. This was during December, and the settings look suitably cold and bleak. There followed just two weeks for special effects work. Post production was over one year, during which time Hilliker made use of the college's synthesiser to compose a moody electronic score and create some amazing sound effects in full stereo.

With a similar overall feel to Neil Jordan's *Company of Wolves* in the same historic setting as Michael Reeves' classic *Witchfinder General*, *Sphere* is certainly very stylish. It would be a good short to put out as a B feature to any new, preferably fantasy, film release, in the same way the sword and sorcery short *Black Angel* (made by another graduate of the National Film and Television School) supported *The Empire Strikes Back*. Whether we'll get a chance to see *Sphere* at our local Odeon now depends on whether Hilliker can find a distributor.

In the meantime he's keeping busy with commercial work, but tells us he would also like to get a new project based on the story of *The Little Mermaid* off the ground. Stephen Hilliker is definitely a film-maker to watch in the future. And remember - you heard about him here first!



Fritz Lang's 1926 sf classic, *Metropolis*, has been reconstructed and revamped. The film now has colour tinting and a contemporary rock soundtrack produced by music-man Giorgio Moroder. Tony Crawley tracked down the composer at Cannes, where the new version of *Metropolis* was premiered.



Purists will hate it. Giorgio Moroder knows that. But the man behind the very 80s sound of almost every film soundtrack from *Midnight Express* and *Cat People* to *Flashdance* and *The Never Ending Story*, is delighted with his version of *Metropolis*.

It's still Fritz Lang's film. The sf masterpiece that allegedly took him through seven million German Marks from 22nd May 1925 until 30th October 1926.

In fact, given the loving reconstruction of all, or most of all the missing clips it's more Lang's film now than whenever you saw it last. It just happens to be Moroder's film, as well.

You'd know that with your eyes shut. The distinctive Moroder sounds makes that clear. Open your eyes and you find it has Moroder colour, too. Lang's film, which once had a hand-painted sequence in colour, is tinted now in a symbolic manner: sepia interiors, blue machinery, etc.

The soundtrack always enhances, never assaults, the ancient visuals. It takes off with Moroder music and songs by Billy Squier, Cycle V, Jon Anderson, Adam Ant, Loverboy, Pat Benatar, Bonnie Tyler and, almost obviously the way Queen has been plugging the film on their latest video, Freddie Mercury.

I detest movie-tinkering – re-makes, sequels (most of them). But I must say Moroder's won me over to this... well, what would you call it... a restoration, a reconstruction?

He's been able to tighten the film in places; the sub-titles are now on the frame, the image, not on separate cards as of old. Naturally, he can't do anything about the dated mode of acting, more mirthful than it should be in places. But Moroder's given the kiss of life to the 1926 classic.

Starburst: What prompted this great – if critically risky – notion of transforming yesterday's classic into today's musical?

Giorgio Moroder: Napoleon! Three years ago when Abel Gance's film was re-released, I thought it'd be a good idea to invent an original soundtrack for a silent film. I screened about twenty films and opted for *Metropolis*. At the beginning, I only arranged the





Above: The evil doppelganger of Maria (Brigitte Helm). Right: The Hero swaps places with a Worker and finds himself "tied to the clock" in his new job. Below: A romantic interlude for these love-struck characters.



first 15 minutes. I liked that so much that, on the spur of the moment, I decided to buy the film rights and started negotiating with the German foundation which held the rights. . .

What other movies did you view?

Most of the Lang ones like *Woman on the Moon* (*Di frau im mond* (1929); released in America as *By Rocket to the Moon*). Then, *Die Nibelungen* (1924) and *Dr Mabuse De Spieler* (1922). *M* (1931) was already with sound. . . Then, I watched some of Murnau, like *Nosferatu* (1922). And I watched again, although I knew it quite well, *Battleship Potemkin* (1925).

That's a most impressive list of instant movie-history films for someone so new to the screen. Midnight Express was your first taste of film work just six years ago. You're a film buff, then?

When I used to be a musician touring Europe, we used to have all day long with nothing to do. All we ever did was go to a movie. This was from 1960 to 1967. So I watched all the movies ever made. *Metropolis* was certainly my favourite.

Is that where you developed your feel for soundtracks – in the cinema?

I never listened to soundtracks. I went to the movies, not to the music! When the opportunity came to compose for the cinema, I was caught by surprise. . . which was probably a plus.

Did you have any legal hassles trying to buy the film rights for Metropolis?

My major problem was David Bowie. When we were working on *Cat People*, I told David about my project only to find he had the



same idea. He was also trying to buy the rights. When he told me that, I nearly fainted – as did he. So we went into a kind of competition. I raised my bid and in all probability paid too much for the rights. And it was only after having bought this copy that I found it was not the original.

Who had the rights to the original then?

Nobody. No original copy exists! I've recorded, to date, more than half a dozen copies of *Metropolis* worldwide. All different. How so?

When Fritz Lang made the film it was three hours long. He shortened it to 2½ hours. When this version was released in the United States, it was considered too long and was cut again – no longer than 90 minutes. Some years later, the company which produced the film in Germany, U.F.A., went bankrupt. Paramount bought it and decreed that the U.S. version of *Metropolis* (the 2½ hour one) was henceforth the original and destroyed not only the three-hours version – but the negative as well.

In 1936, this 2½ hour version was shortened yet again and given to the Museum of Modern Art in New York, which, in translating the sub-title boards, completely changed the sense of the film. It was little more than an approximate translation. Thus, this version now became the official *Metropolis* and now the 2½ hour version disappeared!

That's some story!

Wait! It's not finished. It wasn't that easy! So, the 2½ hour version disappears – with the exception of three collectors who possessed one copy each. The first was an Australian and when he died, two years ago, he bequeathed all his films to the Canberra film library. The second lives in Los Angeles and I met him quite by chance. He has a 35mm copy, which contained four seconds of otherwise missing film, which I bought from him. The third collector is based in San Diego and owns a 9.5mm copy, which dates back to 1928 – it has subtitles instead of boards. That gave me the idea to use, for

my version, subtitles for all the dialogue and boards for all the descriptions and narration.

Is that it...?

No! Another version of the film exists in England, another in Australia, one in Russia and another in East Berlin. Now all of these films are *Metropolis* but each one differs in the interpretation of the film because of errors in translation or editing or simply because scenes have disappeared.

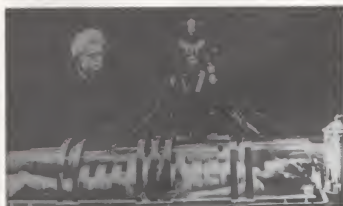
So, what did you retain in your version?

First, I corrected the translation – Italian and German are my first two languages. Then I re-inserted two scenes which are absent from all other versions. One, where we see a workman entering Oshivara, this place of damnation. The other shows the statue of the hero's mother, who was called Hell, which in German, is the name given to a goddess. Both of these scenes had been pulled, probably for censorship reasons.

I also rectified the editing of the film in certain spots. I didn't remove any scenes. I only shortened some. My version is quite short. But this is mainly because I replaced most of the dialogue-boards with subtitles *on* the film. That cuts several minutes from the movie.

As in the reconstructed A Star Is Born, you had to resort to one sequence of still photos – when the worker goes off in a car and is being enticed into the swinging night club of ill repute... some den of 1926 debauchery, no doubt!

Right! We weren't able to find any footage on that. No way! I think I called up... the world! We looked in the States, in Australia, in Eastern Germany, in Moscow, in London. Never able to find it. So, I decided – since I wanted to finish the movie – to use stills.



How did you go about composing your soundtrack?

I organised about five private screenings and distributed a questionnaire to the audience. The majority requested that the music be rock. Also, to start with, I had only four songs. They asked for more. So we have eight now.

Did you search for some computer-way of transferring Metropolis into full colour or did you always fancy the rotoscope tints?

At the very beginning, I thought just to release it black-and-white. Then, I discovered the copy in Australia which was coloured. Tinted. But very badly – the tint faded in and out. That's when I said: If Fritz Lang did it, why shouldn't I? Since I didn't have any experience – *nobody* has any experience in how to do it, with music and restored the way I did it – I made some more tests with audiences. I rented a cinema, put people in, played the film... and the first time I just held some colour-foils in front of the projector, just to see what the reaction was. They loved it!

Since this is a science fiction film, no standards really apply. I decided to divide up the film into atmospheres and not as they did in Lang's time, which was blue for the evenings, one colour inside, another out. I felt you never know if it's day or night in *Metropolis* – you hardly know if you're up or down in the subterranean town.

So, I divided it up with as much colour as possible in the upper-section of the city. The machinery, I thought, should be a metallic blue. The religious stuff should be gold. The hallucinations, which were unreal, would be purple. For the scenes concerning the works, I kept them black-and-white, a kind of grey... but after watching that a few times, it lost impact the



Above: The famous *Metropolis* Roborix. Left: Rotwang (Rudolph Klein-Rogge) connects Maria up to his Robotrix. Below: Maria struggles to control the machines of *Metropolis* as the Workers revolt.



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second the colour went off. So I gave it just a little tint, a very, very light sepi.

Much the same thing happened to me with the sound. We started to jam, just for fun, at the beginning and then tried to put the songs in. I even had some sections without any music – just silence. It didn't work. I watched it with audiences and the second there was no sound, people started to get nervous, started to talk. They weren't interested anymore in what was going on. So I had to have it with full sound.

You opened the film here at Cannes. What's the reaction been? I've just had one bad review. The rest were beautiful. Maybe this guy thought he was a purist, that he couldn't accept anything like this. Maybe, he didn't know that there are several versions around of *Metropolis* already. Maybe he didn't know that at the time they were colouring movies by hand – I've seen a beautiful ten-minute sequence where they had physically painted the print, while I did it a more modern way, by rotochrome. I doubt if he appreciates the fact that I've tried to reconstruct the movie as close as possible to how Fritz Lang made it in 1926. Every other version out there is different, not only in images, but in the text – the story. So what is this guy comparing my version with? Fritz Lang never, never agreed on any of the cuts they did in America. He was so angry he said he'd never go to the States again; that he'd never make another film, in fact. He changed his mind, of course. But he was very angry.

Are you going to produce more movies?

The next time, I'll make my own film. It has to be easier! From September, I'm shooting a short feature about my long investigation into restoring *Metropolis*. . . and we're finishing a script for a movie based on music. A lot of music – *Sizzle*. If we're going to do it, we'll have to do it fast. I've been talking to Steve Barron about it – I did three songs for his *Electric Dreams* (interview on page 22).

Working on any other scores. . . ?

Not now. As well as *Electric Dreams*, I did about 50% of *The Never Ending Story* for Wolfgang Petersen and I'm busy recording people like Jenna Jackson, Michael's sister. Then, I have to go



Above: Mad Scientist Rotwang rants and raves about his strange experiments as the Robotrix looks on. Opposite: Maria in the grip of Rotwang's mysterious machine.



around promoting *Metropolis*, which is difficult as I can't leave the States for more than a week or two at a time. I've three studios in L.A. and lots of musicians waiting on me. . .

What happens when you go to the movies now. Watch the film or listen to the music?

Unfortunately, now that I'm into the movies, I listen a little too much. But I still enjoy them. I liked *Greystoke*. But I avoid tragic ones like *Terms of Endearment*. One thing that does disturb me. I know now what a reel-change is. Whenever I see those little dots in the top right-hand corner. I begin to count – one, two, three. . . That's a little upsetting.

What's your feeling on your rival movie composers?

I admire John Williams – a lot. He is, perhaps, the best today. Ennio Morricone has some great sounds, especially for the Sergio Leone films and I was surprised how well he did a movie that unfortunately didn't do too well, *The Thing*, where he had a great bass-line, a great sound. He's not the youngest guy but he's very much into the new media sounds.

Obvious question: what's your favourite score and/or record?

Midnight Express – not only because it was my first movie but because it worked so well. I just saw it lately and I wouldn't know what to change. My absolute favourite record is still Donna Summer doing *Love To Love You Baby*. That's seven/eight years old now and I can still listen to the entire 17 minutes. The song, itself, is not that great. But the whole feeling. . .

Okay, second obvious question: Was Donna Summer alone in the booth when she recorded that?

Her husband was there. I was there. And a few musicians. She did it right first time but didn't loosen up enough. So I said there's only one way to do this – throw out everybody! Dim the lights. And see you later. I stayed there. But it was completely dark. *Sounds like you could become a great film director, too!*

Maybe. Producer first. One thing I'm not, because I've tried it, is a singer. There's one thing that an artist has to have – and that's a voice. I don't have that. Just a good ear – and an eye for an amazing film. Like *Metropolis*!

AVOID THOSE TACKY XMAS GIFTS...



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DIRECTOR **RUSSELL MULCAHY** ON **RAZORBACK**

FROM EXCITING ROCK STARS TO AUSTRALIA'S BIGGEST BOAR!

A Starburst feature by Alan Jones

Well, here's a turn up for the books! It isn't often I can put a personal friend within these pages – and someone too who has the rare (and dubious?) honour of actually having directed me in something. But Russell Mulcahy has just made his feature debut with an Australian film called *Razorback* and it is just so good that I felt someone ought to draw your attention to it. In some ways I was dreading seeing the film, thinking I would have to politely put it down although why I thought that in retrospect I can't say. So it is with delight – and relief – that I can report that he has come up with the goods and crystallised my faith in him as a name to watch in the future.

Razorback is without doubt the best fantasy debut from a director since Sam Raimi's *The Evil Dead*. And just in case anyone thinks that there may be more than a fair share of nepotism in that statement, let me emphasise for the record that literally everyone I showed it to, including all the *Starburst* staff, agreed with me.

Razorback will be released in this country after a showcase at the next prestigious Avoriaz festival and it is basically a *Jaws* on land story about a giant man-eating pig that causes havoc in the outback. Based on a novel by Peter Brennan it chronicles actor Gregory Harrison's quest to find out the truth behind his wife's disappearance when she goes to cover the kangaroo slaughter controversy for a U.S. television network. As he wanders through this alien landscape looking for clues to why his wife fell victim to a terror that no-one will admit exists, it turns out that fate holds a lot in store for this stranger in a strange land. Within this basic framework, admittedly hackneyed but scripted with verve and sparkle by Everett (*Patrick, Road Games*) de Roche, Mulcahy astutely comments on Australian culture and displays a visual sensibility that cuts to the quick in his unflinching desire to thrill, amuse and move. Nowhere is this more evident than in the galvanising attempted rape and subsequent death of Judy Morris.

Mulcahy is an obvious lover of the fantasy genre – one of the reasons why we hit it off so well in the first place – and it is very rewarding to see his essential rooting in basic Brian de Palma and



Tobe Hooper has paid off with a classic pop culture horror picture. On the strength of his artistic success with *Razorback* he has had calls from a certain Mr Spielberg. Tobe Hooper has asked him to direct the sequel to *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and Dino de Laurentiis wanted him for the new Stephen King film *Silver Bullet*.

All in all, not bad for the 31 year-old, Australian-born Mulcahy who arrived in London six years ago to live on £50 a week and in a matter of moments – or so it seemed – became the “wunderkind” of the rock video world under the initial auspices of Jon Roseman. It is safe to say that no rock video industry existed until it was spearheaded by Mulcahy who laid the foundations others would soon follow. He brought a lavish style to these mini-epics on virtually no budget at all and often ploughed back his meagre fee into the production to give his work the showcase his talent deserved. It would be impossible to list all the promotional videos Mulcahy has had a hand in, but here a few: “Vienna” Ultravox, “Hold on Tight” E.L.O., “Rio” Duran Duran, “Paint Me Down” Spandau Ballet, “Underpass” John Foxx, “Spacer” Sheila B. Devotion, “Tonight

I'm Yours” Rod Stewart, “It's Raining Again” Supertramp, “Gypsy” Fleetwood Mac, “125” 10cc. (the one I “starred” in which incidentally won a “Music Week” award as the best video of the year), and “I'm Still Standing” Elton John. Mulcahy's own personal favourites are the *If* inspired “Elton's Song”, Chas Jankel's “Ai No Corrida” which was banned by literally every TV network and “The Voice” by Ultravox.

Two video clips though, more than any others, consolidated his position at the forefront of this burgeoning industry. They were “Video Killed the Radio Star” by The Buggles which was his first conceptual video to have a major impact in the UK. And the one that broke his name in the American market was Kim Carnes' “Bette Davis Eyes” which was the first time ever a record label, in this case E.M.I., admitted to a video affecting world sales of the song. It was then that the floodgates opened for everyone else to get in on the act signposting the way towards the 24 hour MTV station in America.

All this was very hazily in the future though when I first met Russell Mulcahy who had taken to sleeping on Keith Williams' couch in Ladbroke Grove. Wil-



liams was at one time a contributor to *Starburst's* now defunct sister magazine *Cinema* and is at present the top Hollywood based video conceptualist responsible, most recently, for the *Ghostbusters* promo. Together they pooled their talents for a while to come up with one visual treat after another until inevitably they outgrew each other with the need to expand into their own separate fields. So it is with a peculiar nostalgia now that I recall those heady days prior to the video explosion when Russell would rush in to show us his latest offering totally ignorant of the seminal time we were sharing with him.

At present Mulcahy is working on a feature length Home Box Office spectacular starring Duran Duran to tie in with the future release of their live double album. It may be a case of everyone thinking this is his first film as it looks like it may beat *Razorback* to the cinema circuits. To set the record straight I asked Mulcahy to outline why exactly he got involved with the film. "*Razorback* just seemed to be knocking around for years, didn't it? I can remember asking you to read one of the early drafts and we all agreed we felt it was a bit tv movie-ish. The choice was that or *The Last Starfighter* if I remember correctly. The producers of the film, Hal and James McElroy, had made *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and *The Last Wave* and wanted me to do the film because they saw the video for Duran Duran's "Hungry like the Wolf" and had liked it a lot. I had met them both years ago in 1978 before I came to London as I was doing a clip at the laserium they own in Sydney. My first reaction to their offer was, you've got to be kidding. I did take the script with me when we went to Sri Lanka to do "Rio" but I could never get all the way through it. It was my business manager Gerry Laffy who eventually said I ought to do it. I had been editing all night and I had a meeting scheduled with the McElroy's for 9am that morning. At 7am I asked Gerry to read it for me and at 8.45 when I asked him his opinion, he told me to do it. I got to the meeting and said 'I loved the script!' Really silly, huh? But actually I thought that doing a *Jaws*-like monster movie may not be a bad idea and I did think I'd be able to give it a new perspective. The thought of going back to Aus-

tralia, going back to my roots so to speak, was another plus factor."

Razorback eventually cost 5½ million Australian dollars and while that seems like a lot, especially knowing Mulcahy's track record with inflated budgets, he arrived on the production to find that a good share of that sum had already been spent. "They had already started building this computerised running pig which I told them from the very start wouldn't work. Look at *King Kong* and *The White Buffalo* for good examples of that waste. I knew it could never simulate the correct movements and I stated point blank that it wasn't going to be in the film. We shot it and it looked predictably awful. The

best shots we did of the pig – and we should have done more of them in retrospect – was with a real large pig in a suit. If I had had the choice I would have done a scaled down model of the pet food factory in the climactic scenes and had some Harryhausen type stop-frame animation. I think that's what you miss most in the film, the hooves and the dust. Most of the time we used a cable controlled head for the close-ups and for some other shots we had something which was called the Two Man Boar which to my knowledge only ever had one man in it! I knew we were running out of money at that point in the film. It was useless anyway as the back half was



Opposite page: Director Russell Mulcahy behind the camera on the *Razorback* shoot. Top: The evil-looking silhouette of the giant hog. Above: Pop group Duran Duran dressed up as *Mad Max* clones for their *Wild Boys* video promo, directed by Mulcahy.

RAZORBACK

totally rigid. We had a ramming pig on rails too that was like a 5 o'clock special which we used for the scene at the beginning where it decimates the house."

Some of the money for *Razorback* was put up by Warner Brothers in return for the US distribution rights but after an infamous preview in Los Angeles they demanded cuts and have since dropped the film altogether. "We thought the preview had gone extremely well until we read the report cards which were about 20% favourable and the rest were along the lines of 'This is the cruellest, most evil film I've ever seen - and I've kept your pen, you bastard!' This freaked Warners out who felt the plot had got lost. My original version was a lot gorier. All the deaths were dwelt on in the most obvious places. There really isn't any blood left now in the film which in some ways heighten its impact. I've kept Bill Kerr's death in the hut at home because it went on for about two minutes as he is thrown around by the pig and has his face bitten off. I think it's a shame, but there you go."

Other changes in the film concerned the ending. "We had three endings at one point. *Razorback* was made on a very tight 8 week schedule and fortunately - or unfortunately really as I still quite haven't made my mind up - I had all the backers and the completion guarantors breathing down my neck while I was shooting the final scene which also so happened to be on the last day of the film. I did it in one hand held take and it was atrocious, just laughable. Warners though were willing to stay with that end mainly because I reckon they didn't want to cough up any more money. So I decided to finance an alternative end to the tune of 20 grand because no-one else sure as hell was! Even though it was my money they refused to let me shoot it as I wanted the two survivors to think they had killed the razorback only to find out that it was in reality one of a family. I was aiming for the feeling you got at the climax of *The Birds*. Now I think it was better for them to get away but I really did want to get them out in the fresh air at least. The ending now is at least 100% better than the one we had originally which had a lot

Initially Mulcahy wanted Jeff Bridges for the lead role of Carl Winters. "I'm a great fan of his but Gregory Harrison was suggested and although I'd never heard of him it turned out he was visiting Australia at that time. We met and I thought he was perfect and I think he gives a good performance. The two people I had to fight for most were the characters of Dicko and Benny, the two psychopaths who more or less set the story in motion. In the script they were listed as 35-40 year old rednecks, but I wanted them younger and a bit more punkish. Anti-heroes for the younger audiences if you like. It was a gamble but



Above: Carl Winters arms himself to confront the giant Razorback at the Pet Pak factory.

it paid off handsomely and at times they upstage the monster in the repulsive stakes. Equity allowed us only one American actor which is why Harrison's wife is played by an Australian actress, Judy Morris."

Mulcahy had never really had any experience handling actors before but as expected he rose to the occasion in his usual ingenuous way. "I just thought of the actors as craftsmen and figured it was just a case of relating my ideas to them and discussing it openly. They all knew it was my first film and I think they did give me a lot of leeway. However, it was the first shot on the first day and I had this scene with Bill Kerr, who I think is superb in the picture, and Chris Haywood. Kerr is very establishment and an actor who not only knows his lines word perfectly but the other actor's as well. Haywood is from the other school who likes to improvise. I told Haywood without telling Kerr, to improvise. Wrong. Kerr just went rigid and turned and asked me what the hell was going on. I learned very quickly from that, I can tell you. It was a bit like when I started off in the industry as a film editor. I walked into this tv station and they asked me if I'd ever edited 16mm before. Of course I have, I said. It goes without saying that I hadn't but I learned everything in roughly half an hour. I've bluffed a lot of things in my time."

From a three minute video clip to a feature length movie is a bit of a dramatic step but Mulcahy took it all in his stride. "I always felt a bit frustrated doing those mini-epics as you call them. I tried to cram too much narrative into everything and movies offered me that chance to break loose. It was a complete joy to think of all that time I had to tell a story in my way. The learning experience

here was in how to pace the narrative and control it. I know I've made mistakes in the film but I have to learn. At some points it moves too fast for its own good probably because I was worried about the dramatic tension and some of the transitions could have been better too. Prior to the first day of shooting, I arrived early at the location - Broken Hill, *Mad Max* territory - and just sat there petrified at the thought of all the responsibility the ensuing 8 weeks would hold and what I had to do and it completely overwhelmed me. This wasn't helped by the fact that the first time I walked into a production meeting to face all these people armed with note pads, they wondered where the director was! 'Hi, it's me!' They were all dubious about my capabilities until they saw the first day's rushes and then they all pulled together. The first morning though seemed to me like getting on a roller-coaster. There was just no stopping it and you went with the flow."

The only member of the crew Mulcahy insisted on having was art director Bryce Walmsley, who had aided him on videos in the past, to get the exact look he required. "When I first joined the production I was introduced to this old man who I was told was going to be my art director. Well, I put up with him for a week until I found out that he couldn't even draw. Bryce was in Australia at the time and I rang him and told him he was doing a feature film and to be in my office in 1/2 an hour. The budget doubled in his department as we built most of the sets. The waterhole where the pigs congregate was sculpted, so was the cave where Dicko and Benny slept and the interior of the Pet Pak factory."

Although he entered the industry as an editor, Mulcahy didn't edit *Razorback*



Above: Mulcahy, surrounded by the production crew, on location in Australia's outback. Below: Gregory Harrison as Carl Winters.





but he worked very closely indeed with Bill Anderson who did. "As I shoot I'm cutting the film. I've always worked that way. I know what I want and it was sometimes quite a fight with the producers as to why exactly I needed a particular shot and it can be hard to explain when you're sitting in the middle of a desert freezing to death. It doesn't look cold in the movie but we were always freezing. After a few days I realised I wasn't going to be able to get enough material to cover myself so I shot the film with two cameras. We did have a second unit but I reshot most of their stuff myself. I've never had that experience before. Someone who goes away and shoots parts of your film. It was strange... I didn't like it."

As to be expected, a lot of the preview cards in America indicated that the audience felt *Razorback* was like a two hour MTV video. Mulcahy himself isn't quite sure if that is indeed a valid criticism in

these days of vast changes in the film world and our perception of it. "In some ways I take that as a compliment. I don't call it video imagery as it is my imagery belonging to me whether I do videos or films. It's what I've always been doing and always will do. If that is what people want to call it, then fine. I know I'm always going to be categorised by working in pop promos and there really isn't much I can do about that. It will be like a millstone around my neck for the rest of my life. *Razorback* didn't look like a lingerie department advertisement to you, did it? I'm a great fan of fantasy films and what I did try and put in the film were touches of Kubrick and Hitchcock along with all the more obvious influences. When I told Tobe Hooper about the film I had his mouth watering with my description of the abattoir and all the carcasses hanging like choirboys in a giant cathedral! My other major influence is from the painting I used to

do before I got into the industry. I got my colour sense and composition from that. The most astute criticism I've had about *Razorback* came from Keith (Williams) who said that the film looked like someone had told me it was to be my first and only film, so sling everything in you can. And in some ways he's quite right. Although I do promise you cars do end up in trees because of the flash floods there. Maybe not quite so high... but there has to be a certain element of artistic licence, doesn't there?"

In Australia, where the film premiered earlier this year, the reviews were very mixed. The cheap tabloids loved it but the highbrow ones said words to the effect that it was the greatest Australian embarrassment and one that would put the industry back 10 years. A sample review said, "It looks like *Pottergeist* wandering around a *Top of the Pops* set". Comments like that meant *Razorback* didn't fare too well at the box-office





although Mulcahy still sees one major problem at the root of this failure. "It stems back to my one nagging doubt about the project. Who really wants to go and see a film about a killer pig? It is a lot more than that, of course, but it is difficult to put that across. The poster in Australia didn't help either. It was a full colour portrait of the beast himself with that quote from the film, 'It has two states of being. Dangerous or dead'. Dreadful! I think they should play that down here and bolster up the stranger in a strange land aspect as it is more Gregory Harrison's story than anything else. The pig is just a part of that.

"Perhaps another reason why it didn't do too well is the fact that the Australians are too familiar with events like kangaroo slaughters. It isn't anything special to them. Why would they go hunting kangaroos in the desert where there is no grass? That, of course, is correct and if they are looking for things

like that then something is definitely wrong.

"The peculiar aspect to *Razorback* in my mind is that the best Australian movies haven't been made by Australians. Nick Rosg's *Walkabout* is the perfect example. So when I got back to Sydney after 5 years away I felt anglicised to a degree that made me look at things differently. I did put a lot of my overseas eye into it which is probably why it will work better as a film outside Australia. I could have come a cropper with it though, let's face it, and I suppose that is another reason why I went back to Australia to do it as if it had been a disaster I could have swept it under the carpet and no-one would have been any the wiser. But I figure I've got a lot to be proud of although I never ever saw it in terms of a big box office smash like perhaps the producers did. I made *Razorback* primarily as a thriller for horror fans like you and me who were



probably sick to death of seeing the same old boring splatter. As entertaining as possible with the interest kept at a dynamic level whenever the story showed signs of flagging. As far as I'm concerned *Razorback* was one from the heart."

Razorback (1984)

Starring: Gregory Harrison (as Carl Winters), Arkie Whiteley (Sarah Cameron), Bill Kerr (Jake Cullen), Chris Haywood (Benny Baker), David Argue (Dicko Baker), Judy Morris (Beth Winters), John Ewart (barman), John Howard (cameraman).
Directed by: Russell Mulcahy. Screenplay by Everett de Roche, based on the novel by Peter Brennan. Edited by Bill Anderson. Special effects by David Yardley, Ted Pride and Nik Dornig. Makeup by Bob McCarron and Wendy Seinsbury. Produced by Hal McElroy.

Above left: Mulcahy and crew film *Inside Dicko* and Benny's cave. Far left: Carl Winters after a hard night in the outback. Left: Sarah Cameron (Arkie Whiteley) takes a shower. Top left: Winters encounters the *Razorback*. Top right: The distraught Beth Winters (Judy Morris) at the wheel of her car. Below: An atmospheric shot of the Australian landscape home of the *Razorback*.



—STARBURST— FILM REVIEWS

GREMLINS

"Warped, instantaneous fun."

A Starburst Review
by Alan Jones

Gremlins comes on strong like the demented Disney film you've never seen but always hoped for. It's too cute, too nasty, too manic and just too much for words. Joe Dante has made an off the wall original that almost seems like a sequel to his wonderful episode in *The Twilight Zone*.

Plot content is low and characterisation virtually nil in Chris Columbus' script that is really nothing more than a sketchy shaggy dog story outlining the possible reasoning behind that wartime expression "a gremlin in the works". Likeable mad inventor Hoyt Axton goes looking for a Christmas present for his son, Zach Galligan, in Chinatown and buys an adorable furry creature called a mogwai that comes with a set of warnings that would set most normal parents' alarm bells ringing. No bright light, no contact with water and no feeding after midnight are the grim rules for the fabled beasts but each one is accidentally flouted by Galligan. Unknowingly he unleashes an army of evil creatures bent on the destruction of his Smalltown U.S.A. neighbourhood.

Gremlins is merely a series of set-pieces highlighting the mind-boggling virtuosity of Chris Walas' fantastic audio-animatronic creations - he, and only he, is the true star of this movie. To reveal too much about the gremlins mischievousness would greatly undermine the impact of the film. Suffice it to say that the masterstroke Dante and Co. pull here is in investing the tiny terrors with recognisable human foibles pushed to the limit. This is especially the case when they indulge in boozey bar room antics followed by a trip to the cinema to see *Snow White*. One of Dante's more showy traits gets full rein here too with virtually every scene containing an in-joke about his producer, his composer, his favourite movies and the casual incongruity of the more bizarre aspects of Americans. He is one of the few directors who wears his heart visibly on his sleeve.

Ultimately *Gremlins* emerges as warped instantaneous fun - and if the truth be told, nothing much else.



Top: The final shot of *Gremlins* in which Zach Galligan heads for home, presumably on the high road to China. Above: Artih, isn't he lovely. Below: Phoebe Cates as Kate.

Whenever something substantial threatens to impinge on the high camp high jinks - like the starving family who desperately need a bank loan or Phoebe Cates distressing story of how her father died - it all seems jarringly out of place. However all this melts into the background when Dante confronts us with such crowd-pleasing elements as gremlins breakdancing, 'flashing', wielding chainsaws and singing "Hi Ho" along with the seven dwarfs. Dante is such a stylistically super director that you can almost sense the firm hand behind all these eccentric scenes.

Gremlins will take audiences off-guard though. The cuteness of the first hour or so certainly doesn't prepare anyone for the *Alien* inspired horrors to



come - and I make specific reference here to the episode in the kitchen. Nevertheless this view of *Gremlins* can only be firmly rooted in the darker side of every children's dreams and nightmares, therefore it becomes palatably affectionate and hysterically entertaining.

With its unique far-out quality, *Gremlins* is best described as *The Evil Dead* for kids. See it in a crowd for maximum enjoyment.

Starring: Zach Galligan, Phoebe Cates, Hoyt Axton, Polly Holliday and Frances Lee McCain. Directed by Joe Dante, Produced by Michael Finnell, Written by Chris Columbus. Executive Producers: Steven Spielberg, Frank Marshall and Kathleen Kennedy, Music by Jerry Goldsmith.



ELECTRIC DREAMS

A Starburst Review
by Alan Jones

Electric Dreams is a fantasy *Flashdance* – something I can well do without, thank you. Describing itself as a contemporary fairytale about a computer that falls in love, it would seem to be the lighter side of *WarGames*. It isn't. It's a superficial, dull, cliché-ridden 90 minute soundtrack album plug from Virgin Films and rock video-promo director, Steve Barron.

Barron's film is everything I suspected would happen when a director from this fledgling industry got his hands on an insipidly sentimental script. It really does resemble three minute rock videos strung together in the hope of coming across as narrative. If I hadn't seen Russell Mulcahy's brilliant *Razorback* in the same week, I would have given up in despair at ever seeing a feature director in the making.

Electric Dreams will look great on *Top of the Pops* accompanied by the Phil Oakley title track or the Boy George songs as it consists solely of trailers in search of a structure. So don't be fooled. *Electric Dreams*? I'd rather have electric shocks any day! ■

Starring: Lenny Von Dohlen (*Miles*), Virginia Madsen (*Madeleine*), Maxwell Caulfield (*Bill*), Bud Cort (*Edgar*). Directed by Steve Barron. Produced by Rusty Lemorande and Larry De Wasy. Original Story and Screenplay by Rusty Lemorande. Soundtrack by Culture Club, Giorgio Moroder, Jeff Lynne and Heaven 17.



Giorgio Moroder presents METROPOLIS

"A fabulous reminder of how truly great *Metropolis* actually is."

A Starburst Review
by Alan Jones.

A couple of years ago, Oscar winning composer/producer Giorgio Moroder had a private screening of one of his favourite films – Fritz Lang's futuristic landmark of the silent era, *Metropolis*. While the film was unspooling, the stereo had been left playing in the background. Thus the idea was born of giving Lang's classic vision of tomorrow a new contemporary score to reinstate its immediacy as the *Star Wars* of its time.

This new version has been re-edited, colour-tinted with old footage and recently discovered stills added, and the special effects segments have been optically enhanced. The result, not that we really need it, is a fabulous reminder of how truly great *Metropolis* actually is. A contrived and simplistic parable in retrospect but unforgettable nevertheless with striking images of the 21st Century that have been successively plagiarised ever since.

And Moroder's ultra-modern hi-tech score is undoubtedly one of the best he's ever done. But then I am a fan ever since his collaborations with Donna Summer which may make all the difference. It musically matches Lang's visual grandeur in power, tone and feeling and maintains a Hi-NRG excitement that makes it one of the fastest 87 minutes I've ever sat through.

Even the songs by various rock luminaries as Bonnie Tyler, Pat Benatar, Adam Ant and Freddie Mercury, the latter being the best in my opinion, seem in context, making Moroder's achievement all the more remarkable considering some film historians may consider this treatment of such a confirmed masterpiece as sacrilege.

Whichever way you look at it though, his *Metropolis* is well worth seeing. Nothing can lessen the impact of Lang's archetypal epic of German expressionism or the mesmerising dual performance by Brigitte Helm as Maria and her robot double. Moroder's score is just the icing on the cake. But for those of us with a sweet tooth, it may just be the best part of all. ■

Starring: Gustav Frohlich, Brigitte Helm, Alfred Abel. Directed by Fritz Lang. Screenplay by Thea Von Harbou. Photography by Karl Freund and Gunther Rittau. Music by Giorgio Moroder. Lyrics by Peter Bellotta. Originally released in 1926.

VIDEO FILE

Reviews by Barry Forshaw

As the official list of banned videos escalates week by week, it can safely be said that the video industry is passing through its darkest hour. The Video Trade Association has issued its own list for the protection of dealers which is considerably shorter than the list of films to be seized issued by the Director of Public Prosecutions. Derek Mann of the VTA points out that his organisation has only listed titles which have been successfully prosecuted. But as Guy Collins of VTC pointed out after the successful defence of *Possession* (on which VTC has spent over £50,000 in direct costs – most of which was awarded to the company after the D.P.P. prosecution failed), "I don't think it changes anything, in that there'll still be charges against BBFC certificated material – such as *Possession* – it seems that there's some deliberate intention on the part of the D.P.P. to bust a BBFC title, and once they've got that under their belts, they can progress onto other things."

VIDEO VOLUME

A fascinating new book on the subject has been issued by Pluto Press called *The Video Nasties*, edited by Martin Barker. His earlier volume on the persecution and destruction of the 50's E.C. comics, *Haunts of Fear*, drew many convincing parallels with the current hysterical witch hunt orchestrated by the Daily Mail, the Festival of Light brigade and many M.P.s. The new book is a revelation even to those of us who've followed the astonishing duplicity and rush-to-judgement tactics of the video campaigners. And for those of a liberal cast of mind who initially made an exception of their dislike of censorship for the distorted facts they were spoon-fed by the popular press, Barker's book is a clear warning of the dangers of all freedoms signposted by the government's firm intervention in the current campaign.

Regrettably, the book makes less play with the implications of government censorship (particularly the much vaunted return to "Victorian Values" – presumably those same values which made Victorian society so exemplary in its total lack of crime, social deprivation, sexual repression and exploitation of the poor). And it's strange that Barker attempts to make an artistic defence for certain films that have been prosecuted, while ignoring much work by far more talented (and, one would have thought, defensible) directors such as Dario Argento, which have now been put (in Vatican terminology) "on the list".



Above: Isabelle Adjani, star of the censorship test case movie *Possession*.

It's in the area of specific films defended that *Starburst* is cited, in such august company as George Orwell, F. R. Leavis and Robin Wood. And it's a shame that Alan Jones' critique of *Spit On Your Grave* is quoted only selectively, rather altering the point he is making (Distortion of the facts is the principal tactic of our moral guardians, and it's a shame to see such a refreshingly level-headed book doing the same). The passage quoted, a criticism of the protracted rape sequence, was followed by the words (here unquoted) "It arguably does give the character the sufficient motivation to wreak her terrible revenge on her four tormentors". And although Alan Jones isn't totally sold on this idea, it does tie in with one of the book's main arguments – that the film is almost a feminist tract in its insistence on the bestiality of the attackers (and in no way an incitement to rape). Still, qualifications aside, it's a book that should be read by *Starburst* readers.

A STAR BIRDS REVIEW

If, after calling Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds* one of the greatest fantasy movies of all time, I go on to add a list of qualifications and excuses, you may wonder why I'm part of the large critical fraternity that regards this movie so highly.

Well, it's unquestionably one of the greatest "doomsday" visions ever put on film – particularly in its picture of a brilliantly drawn community (the small coastal town of Bodega Bay) finally mastering its scepticism to deal with ever-increasing bouts of ornithological fury. And the central attack on the town, with its dizzying "birds'-eye-view" shot of a burning petrol station before the birds swoop menacingly into frame, is an absolute tour-de-force of suspense film-making. The climax of the sequence, with heroine 'Tippi' Hedren trapped in a phone booth battered by murderous birds, works both as a pulse-thumping film excitement and as an effective judged image of reversal – the human beings are now the caged, helpless creatures.

In fact, it's what lies beneath the film's mounting intensity of narrative terror that gives substance to *The Birds* (now re-issued on video at a very reasonable price by CIC) – Hitchcock called it an "attack on complacency", and the long, slow introduction (the first of my "qualifications"!) is absolutely necessary for building the characters (the rich and superficial heroine, the family unit with Rod Taylor and Jessica Tandy, brilliant as his possessive mother – a recurring figure in

TAKE OUR WORD FOR IT



starburst's at-a-glance guide to the tops and flops currently lurking on the shelves of your local video shop.



HITS

1. *Hundra* (Thorn EMI)
2. *Coming Soon* (CIC)
3. *The Empire Strikes Back* (CBS/Fox)
4. *The Wicker Man* (Thorn EMI)
5. *The Fourth Man* (Embassy)

PITS

1. *NATAS: The Reflection* (Alpha)
2. *The Coming* (Replay)
3. *Home Sweet Home* (Media)
4. *Blood Voyage* (Inligr)
5. *Nightmare in Blood* (Cyclo)

Hitchcock!). Of course, readers of *Starburst*, more familiar with special effects techniques than the average viewer, will find that great strides have been made since *The Birds* was first issued, and will have to make allowances. But the greatest allowance has to be made for the severely reduced impact of Hitchcock's movie on the TV screen – not the least the brilliantly unsettling use of sound. The bird attacks are "aurally orchestrated" in the manner of a symphonic soundtrack (the film has no music, though Hitch's long-time collaborator Bernard Herrmann worked on the electronic alterations of bird noises) and certainly sounded more terrifying via large cinema auditorium speakers. Still, lengthy introduction and dated special effects notwithstanding (you'll really have to tolerate some of the back projection!) I can't advise *Starburst* readers too strongly to find out for themselves why Hitch's first post-*Psycho* movie was such an influence on contemporary directors such as Steven Spielberg, Brian De Palma and John Carpenter (Carpenter's township in *The Fog*, so convincingly created, owes much to the Bodega Bay of *The Birds* – and the latter town is even referred to as an act of homage!).

CORN FROM THORN

The total deluge of Stephen King adaptations continues with two new videos. Firstly, Fritz Kiersch's *Children of the Corn* (Thorn EMI), this time not adapted from a novel, but a story in the excellent collection *Night Shift*. Certainly, Kiersch has done a very stylish job in creating the Nebraska town in the grip of occult forces; the deceptively beautiful "American" views of waving cornfields, etc., have a hidden menace that continually unsettles. And editing is particularly well executed, not least in the opening murders of the adult population of the town. One has to say, though, that the children have none of the sustained menace of, say, the alien spawned kids of *Village of the*



Damned, and the final manifestation of "The One Who Walks Behind The Rows" betrays the movie's low budget. Still, this is one to catch, and bodes well for future movies by Kiersch.

SHAGGY DOG STORY

The other new King video is Lewis Teague's *Cujo* (Guild) in which Teague continues to display the sharp eye evident in *The Lady in Red* and *Alligator* – but without John Sayles' witty screenplay contributions, there is less humour evident in this more small-

scale study in terror. King's tale has been pared down to some detail about the marital problems of his housewife heroine (excellently played, as usual, by Dee Wallace) and the final siege in her car, where she suffers – along with her small son – the rabid assaults of the diseased St. Bernard of the title.

Teague manages to extract maximum suspense from her claustrophobic central situation, and the constant underlining of the pastoral beauty of the farmyard setting counterpoints the grisly assaults with genuine skill. The problem with the film is that, finally,

NEW AND FORTHCOMING

It's here! CBS Fox are issuing *The Empire Strikes Back*. Thorn EMI has *Hundra*, *The Osterman Weekend*, and in their low price "Star" series, the cult classic *The Wicker Man*. Warners has their "big gun" *Greystoke* and a re-issue of Pete Walker's *Schizoid*. From Disney, *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, and from VFM the striking *Daughters of Darkness*.

the object of menace lacks the extra dimension of terror with which King invests his more customary antagonists. And despite the care taken with the various dogs used in the film, it's still difficult to accept some of the battering "Cujo" appears to receive – we don't grow to loathe him enough.

FRENCH THRILLER

Bob Swaim's much acclaimed Parisian thriller *La Balance* has now been issued on video by CBS Fox, and it's a real winner – a knockout combination of stunningly staged violence and sharply etched studies of petty criminals and the brutal unsympathetic cops who manipulate them. Swaim, an American, has a cool foreigner's eye-view of the city that avoids travelogue "detail" and paints a gritty, realistic background for the beatings and gun battles that he orchestrates with such skill. I have to end this favourable review by asking a question, though: how do you feel about dubbing? If you're like me, you'll find the American dubbing of this very French film absolutely ruinous – but I suppose there are people who wouldn't rent a video with sub-titles, and one can understand why CBS Fox might choose to issue this version. Still, it's a great shame.

I see that space precludes my discussing *War Games* (Warners) till next month, but let me commend it to you now.

BRIEF NOTICES

capsule comments by starburst

video reviewer Barry Forshaw

Frank Frazetta's muscular warriors and buxom Rubens-esque beauties come to animated life in Ralph Bakshi's *Fire And Ice* (Thorn EMI); the plotting by Marvel's Roy Thomas and Gerry Conway is less inventive than their screenplay for Fleischer's *Conan The Destroyer*, but no-stop action is the name of the game here.

You may feel that the presence of Barbara Steele in *Silent Scream* (Intervision) is a good enough reason for renting the video – well, it depends how much of a fan of horror's Prime Diva you are. She really only appears in the film's (lively) finale, the rest is another

rip-off of *Psycho*. Even down to the score.

Herschell Gordon Lewis pioneered the combination of graphic make-up effects and invisible production values – but his rival Andy Milligan in *Blood Rites* (Scorpio – a.k.a. *The Ghastly Ones*) makes Lewis look like Kubrick. Hilariously inept slayings performed against the tattiest period settings you're ever likely to see.

From the ever-reliable Videome-dia, Mark Griffiths' *Highway To Hell* is a pacey and erotic thriller – like Thorn EMI's recent find *Cross Country*, it embeds the same elements in the "road movie" format, but finds more black humour in the situations (such as death by water bad and T.V. screen!). One to look out for



Top: Yoda, one of the stars of *The Empire Strikes Back*, available now on CBS/Fox video. Above: *The Children of the Corn* stars Linda Hamilton and Peter Horton.

• IT'S ONLY A MOVIE •

A Column by John Brosnan

I was a little disturbed to learn that the new Bond movie, *A View to a Kill*, features an airship – presumably one of the new Skyships – in its climactic action sequence. My battery of lawyers has been instructed to examine the finished film very carefully. If it infringes in any way on my great and epic novel *Skyship* the writs will fly like confetti. You've been warned, Cubby.

Of course, don't be surprised, gentle readers, if there is not a single sign of an airship in *A View to a Kill*. After the missing dinosaurs in *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* I don't trust anything I hear about movies in production anymore (I still think cutting the dinosaurs out was a bad move).

Actually, I may be lenient with ol' Cubby even if he has got a Skyship in his picture because I'm feeling a bit sorry for him at the moment. He's being sued for 225 million dollars by Sean Connery. Connery is also suing MGM/UA, claiming that the company and Broccoli owe him profits from the Bond movies he appeared in as well as a share in the merchandising profits. Nice one, Sean.

No, stop smiling out there. This is serious and naturally Broccoli is shocked, upset and deeply hurt. "I made the boy a star and this is how he repays me!" is the gist of his reaction. If Connery's lawsuit is successful this column will, of course, be organising a collection for Cub to help him over this bad patch. We could do no less for the man who gave the world Roger Moore as James Bond (not to mention Moonraker).

CENSORSHIP DOWN UNDER

And while our hearts are overflowing with compassion for those less fortun-

ate than ourselves, spare a thought for those Down Under. Earlier in the year they were subjected to a 12 day visit from Mary Whitehouse anxious to spread the anti-video word to the poor, ignorant Aussies. "Just as illicit drugs are a threat to the body, these videos are a threat to the mind!" she cried at a press conference in Perth. "There is no way Britain and Australia can keep themselves free of this material – it needs international agreements! But do not get the idea I'm a prude," she added, redundantly.

According to one-time *Starburst* contributor John Baxter, who now lives in Sydney, Australia didn't even know it had a video problem until Mrs Whitehouse arrived with the news. Unlike Britain, however, the popular press there were hostile to the idea of censorship but the politicians quickly jumped on the bandwagon, as they did in Britain, and the result is that some of the states are introducing their own video censorship systems and ignoring the Federal government's recently introduced guidelines. This is a step back to the bad old days of movie censorship in Australia when a film could be censored twice before it reached the screen: once by the Federal censor and then by the state censor (often there was hardly enough film left to run through the projector).

The main difference between the British and Australian anti-video campaigns seems to be that the latter one is directed against sex videos instead of horror movies. But as John Baxter writes: "The politicians should give some attention to the dope problem rather than harriving pornographers; Australians aren't all that interested in sex, but they are taking to heroin like it was Vegemite (a sort of Oz Marmite), and Marijuana is now the second



Above: *Australian Fantasy*. A scene from Peter Weir's intriguing movie which starred David Gulpilil as a young aborigine with weird powers. Below: Lawyer Richard Chamberlain attempts to penetrate the veil surrounding Aboriginal lore in the same movie.

largest Australian cash crop after wheat. The Italians are cleaning up. Along the Victorian border it's like Sicily, with whole towns controlled by the Mafia, complete with executions."

Hmm, you know, that's not a bad idea for a movie. An Australian Mafia movie set in the Outback. Yeah! You could call it *The G'dayfather*, or *Once a Jolly Hitman*. I can see it now – Mafia victims being thrown into billboards wearing hats with concrete corks. The possibilities are endless. All I have to do is figure out a way of working in some dinosaurs, and maybe an airship...

AUSTRALIAN SF

Still Down Under, Mary Whitehouse isn't the only self-publicist to have discovered Australia recently. The *enfant terrible* of American science fiction, Harlan Ellison, has become enraptured by the unique atmosphere of the place and intends to publish an anthology of Australian SF stories. But these won't be ordinary stories; Harlan wants something special. This is how he put it in an Australian SF magazine: "The book is intended to present an open-door on the mythic Australia. The power, the ancient magic, the superimposed precontinuum that one feels at Hanging Rock, up in the Flinders Ranges when meeting a native Aboriginal on the dusty streets of Hawker. In short, that inexplicable sense of region and milieu that Peter Weir captured in *Picnic at Hanging Rock*... To be specific, a sense of Australia as a land of power and myth, a place of new magic sunk to its roots in ancient mysteries... That's what we're trying to capture..."

Not just another book of so-so yarns but a gestalt that will be *echt*-Australian. That opens for Australians, and non-Australians, a doorway into a landscape of strangeness and, again, ancient mystery. The feeling one gets from watching *Picnic* and *The Last Wave*; that sense of looking through a rift in normal space-time, into a place where the Mary Celeste and the Wandering Jew and Kaspar Hauser might exist side-by-side...

There's more – much more – but I think you get the picture. You did? Well, it's more than I got. After I read the above I sort of sat there mumbaling Australian things like "Strewth!" and "Fair crack of the whip, Harlan!" I mean, I think he's asking a bit much from a single short story. Even I, an Australian thru-and-thru, Blue, didn't know where to begin. I hate to admit it but I've never met an Aboriginal on the dusty streets of Hawker (where is Hawker?) nor have I ever been to a picnic at Hanging Rock. I don't even know what *echt*-Australian means. *Eck*-Australia! is a familiar term but what the heck is *echt*?

Even so I've had a go. My story starts off with an Aboriginal (from Hawker), the Wandering Jew and Kaspar Hauser on the Mary Celeste. A mysterious waterspout sends the boat through a rift in space-time and deposits it on top of Hanging Rock where Peter Weir is having a picnic. Suddenly there is a scream and a group of schoolgirls appear with a dinosaur in hot pursuit...

But I won't spoil the ending for you. You can read it in Harlan's anthology.

I wonder if Peter Weir would be interested in the movie rights? ■



The *Tripods* is a long-running tv series comprising three seasons.

The second is, at present, in production and from what we have seen of the first thirteen episodes, it looks as if it will be just as intriguing. Where, I think, *The Tripods* scores over the popularity of other BBC science fiction series, *Doctor Who* and *Blake's 7* for example, is in its acting and execution. The characters are not fantasy heroes, they are everyday people thrown into a future of appalling domination by giant three-legged machines. These colossi keep the people of Earth contented by controlling their minds from the age of 16 upwards. As the year is 2089 and the Tripods have dominated since their invasion 100 years before, their successful capping technique has brainwashed all the memory from preceding generations, and no one can remember the terrible battle that took place when the invasion occurred or how the Tripods destroyed whole cities, killing millions of people.

Obviously the sinister plot behind *The Tripods* seeming benevolence in 2089 will not be revealed until the third series, but at least we have witnessed the beginnings of a rebellion. In one of the English villages, where life and clothing styles are reminiscent of 1789, rather than the next century, one boy, Will Parker, due to be capped in the next ceremony, decides to run away seeking the *White Mountains*, a secret refuge somewhere in Europe where men are free of the Tripods. The first Thirteen episodes tell of the perilous voyage with his cousin Henry and a French boy, nicknamed "Beanpole", who joins them.

Director Christopher Barry, the man responsible for episodes 9 to 13, found the series a delight to work on. Having directed numerous episodes of *Doctor Who*, he has appreciated the different approach of *The Tripods* when compared with other SF television series. One thing he liked was the return to 18th-century cultures, forced upon the people of Earth by the Tripods destruction of any form of modern technology. In fact he recalls how on one particular day a plastic milk crate was accidentally left on set and went unnoticed until the sequence was screened. "In a costume drama that would be disastrous, however in *Tripods* it works very well. It's quite possible for the odd 20th-century artefact to have lasted into the future, without anybody realising what it was actually for."

This is an attitude shared by the creator of *The Tripods*, author John Christopher. He first wrote the trilogy (of which *The White Mountains* is part one) back in 1968. In the opening chapter, Will Parker finds his Father's pride and joy, an old wristwatch, inscribed with the words "Anti-Magnetique Incabloc". Will believes, as does the whole village, that it must be the name of the craftsman who originally made it before the coming of The Tripods.

TV ZONE

by Richard Holliss



Above: One of the Tripods from the tv series of the same name. Below: The two young heroes of Tripods, Henry Parker (Jim Baker) and Will Parker (John Shackley).



Effects wise, the first series uses Tripods very sparingly. "They don't even appear in some episodes," claims the director. Barry also admires the way the effects team on the series have worked out how to mobilise the giant machines. H. G. Wells described the

spider. In order to add credibility to some of the excellent matte shots of the Tripods towering above the tiny people of Earth, gigantic sections of each of the three legs were constructed. Cumbersome to transport on location, they nevertheless added enormously to the desired effect.

All in all *The Tripods* is an excellent series and a welcome change. With the promise of some spectacular effects in the second and third series, the future of *The Tripods* looks very entertaining and highly recommended.

The Tripods. A BBC Production in association with Freemantle International, Inc and The Seven Network, Australia. Cast: John Shackley (*Will Parker*), Jim Baker (*Henry Parker*), Ceri Seel (*Beanpole*), Pamela Salem (*French Countess*) episodes 5, 6, 7 and 8, Charlotte Long (*Eloise*) episodes 5, 6 and 7. Costume Designer Phoebe De Gave. Producer Richard Bates. Director Graham Theakston episodes 1-8, Christopher Barry episodes 9-13. Composer Ken Freeman. Series One *The White Mountains* written by John Christopher and adapted for television by Alick Rowe. Series Two *The City of Gold and Lead* written by John Christopher and adapted by Christopher Penfold. Series Three *The Pool of Fire* written by John Christopher and adapted by Alick Rowe.

With a new series of *The A-Team* and *Knight Rider* having just started on ITV, here are one or two other American shows we can expect soon.

Streethawk. Universal tv drama starring Rex Smith as a motorcycle cop recruited by the federal government to fight crime with the world's most sophisticated motorcycle.

Highway to Heaven. Michael Land on stars as an angel sent to Earth on probation to help people in need.

V. Based on the popular mini-series that was first screened in May 1983 on American television, the story involves aliens who attempt to take over the Earth.

Mini-series still seem to be the most successful item of American tv fare. ABC is promising six new programmes, including the animated series *The Littles* and *Crisis Game*, the re-creation of a wargame exercise which the company anticipates will cause similar interest to *The Day After*.

And while we touch on the subject of V, it rated no 7 in the National 100 top programmes dated August 12. It was beaten by *Coronation Street*, *Solo*, *Crossroads*, *Voyage of the Damned*, *Carry On Doctor* and *Only Fools and Horses*. However it triumphed over such illustrious shows as *Hi-de-Hi*, *Dynasty* and *Top of the Pops*. *Star Trek* came in at number 39 and the BBC *Olympic* coverage at number 55. This meant that V, had an average viewing audience of over 10 million. Not bad for a series that was shunned by nearly every tv critic.

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• BOOK • WORLD

Reviews by Chris Charles

According to Sphere's publicity department *The ET Storybook* sold 1600,000 copies in paperback, and they're doubtless hoping for similar success with *The Dune Storybook*, now out at £2.50. This is filled with colour stills from the forthcoming film and has a story by the SF writer Joan Vinge, based on a screenplay by David Lynch which is in turn derived from the original novel by Frank Herbert.

Personally I can never see the point of reading a story based on a screenplay adapted from a novel – I'd much rather read the original book. But I suppose the photographs are the real lure for potential buyers and the whole book itself a memento of the movie. No doubt they make good Christmas presents for youngsters who've seen the film and are now a prime market for all the spin-off products. But it all seems a bit parasitic to me.

The original *Dune* novel was remarkable for its detailed evocation of an alien world – a world of exotic characters and settings, dominated by the parched, arid expanses of the planet Arrakis itself. But judging by the stills in the *Storybook*, David Lean hasn't managed to capture a fraction of this exoticism. The prevailing impression is one of drabness, with costumes and sets which look rather unimaginative and lacking in flair. I'm still hoping that the film will turn out to be a good advertisement for the novel, but on the evidence of the *Storybook* the omens are not good.

Dune made a big impact on science fiction, and I have a feeling that *Neuromancer* by William Gibson (Gollancz, £8.95) is also going to be very well received. As a first novel it's remarkably assured and moves along at a splendid pace. Basically it's a futuristic high-tech thriller about a man named Case who is able to link his mind directly into Cyberspace, a region where computer programmes have a three-dimensional reality. With the aid of a trained streetfighter named Molly, Case penetrates the mysterious and powerful Tessier-Ashpool Corporation on their orbiting satellite of Straylight, eventually encountering the artificial intelligence called Neuromancer.

I have to admit that the resolution of this novel – which results in the defeat of Tessier-Ashpool and Case inheriting a fortune – eluded me in the sense that I couldn't really figure out what had happened. This is very much a novel for the computer-literate, with characters zipping into and out of Cyberspace and meeting other characters who often don't exist in the real world. It's very disorientating. But despite this I had the impression that the author knew exactly what was going on and that all the clues are there for the alert and knowledgeable reader. Gibson does, in fact, write with considerable authority; his characterisation is good and his future world is extremely well-visualised – a seedy urban future in



Below: A scene from the movie version of *Dune*.



which poverty and advanced technology rub shoulders. My only real qualm about the novel is that it's founded on a rather dubious morality: Case, with whom we are presumably supposed to identify, is a self-confessed killer, and no one in the book would think twice

about zapping anyone who threatened them so that basic human values are sacrificed to the exigencies of the admittedly exciting plot. Nevertheless *Neuromancer* had a great feeling of freshness, not least in that it takes its science-fiction trappings entirely for

granted. I'll be interested to see what Gibson does next.

The Science Fiction Source Book edited by David Wingrove (Longman, no price given) is a kind of potted guide to the state of the art in SF which features alphabetical entries on writers and various articles on themes, writing methods, criticism, SF magazines and so on. Most of the articles are interesting and informative, but I was far less happy with what the blurb describes as a "Consumer's Guide to the work of 880 science fiction authors".

There are two main problems with the entries, the first being an irritating points system under which sample works of a given author are rated under the headings Readability, Characterisation, Idea Content and Literary Merit. Authors can win up to five stars in each category. The reader's eye is immediately drawn to these departments, the temptation being to tot up stars and then compare them with other writers. The trouble is that the entries themselves have been written by different people with different interests and widely differing critical abilities. Some are obviously fans of a given author, and thus endow them with as many stars as possible, while others are more severe or detached in their judgements. This leads to such absurdities as Philip Jose Farmer and Harlan Ellison scoring five stars in every department for certain stories or novels, a feat which eludes H. G. Wells, George Orwell, Aldous Huxley and many others. The inevitable implication is that Farmer and Ellison are somehow "better" writers, which is patently absurd. The star system is thoroughly misleading because novels and stories are organic wholes, not the sum of disparate parts; and the system is made doubly unreliable by the lack of a consistent critical tone throughout the entries.

Legion by William Peter Blatty (Fon-tana, £1.75) is the sequel to *The Exorcist*, a film which I have to admit scared the pants off me when I first saw it many moons ago. This new book is a curious affair which for a long time seems to bear no relationship to the film of my memory (I didn't actually read the book). It involves a series of brutal murders and the drama is primarily psychological, with very little of an occult atmosphere. I enjoyed it, but I'm not sure it's the kind of sequel most readers will expect.

The History of the RuneStaff is another good value omnibus edition of Michael Moorcock's work from Granada at £2.95. This one features the exploits of Dorian Hawkmoon in his battle against the evil empire of Granbretan. Moorcock's plotting is a bit hasty at times, but his narrative power usually carries the reader over the humps. These are efficient and often inventive entertainments, uncluttered with the mystical or philosophical pretensions which bedevil inferior fantasy writers.

DATA BANK

Information from the filing cabinet of Dr Sally Gary

It's that time of the month again, Starbursters! But before I get down to the nitty-gritty of delving into the legendary filing cabinet and answering the data-day queries that pour into the Starburst office, it's record straightening time...

BAVA COMPLETIST

D. Dite (David? Danny?) dropped me a line to pull me up for leaving a couple of films out of the Mario Bava index I compiled way, way back in Starburst 64. Seems Signore Bava handled second unit direction on 1963's *The Wonders of Aladdin*, as well as directing *Danger Diabolik* (1968, how could I forget that one?), *The Antecedent* (1971) and *Baby Kong* (1977). He also worked on the 1959 movie *The Giant of Marathon* as director of photography. I hang my head in shame!

YUTTE AGAIN...

I also received a long letter from N. Barbano (don't people sign their first names any more?) in Denmark detailing the life story and career details of Hammer scream queen Yutte Stensgaard. Her real name is Jytte Steensgaard, Danish by birth. She began her acting by screentesting for a Danish picture *The Red Mantle*, but didn't get the part. Then she moved to England where she was 'discovered' by producer Betty Box, appearing in *A Girl with a Pistol*, *The Buttercup Chain* (1969), *Scream and Scream Again* (1970), *Some Girls Do* (1969) as well as *Lust for a Vampire* and *Zeta* (both mentioned last time around). On TV she appeared in episodes of *Return of the Saint*, *The Persuaders*, *Doctor in the House* and *Jason King*. She was married to director Anthony Curtis. The only thing Mr Barbano got wrong was in telling me that Yutte worked under the stage name of Yootha Joyce, which we Brits know to be completely false. Yootha, we all remember, was Mildred

to Brian Murphy's George in the hit comedy series of the Seventies. Can't win 'em all, chum. But thanks for the info, anyway!

GOBLIN CORRECTIONS

Ah, me. Seems like I don't get anything right, these days. Next smart alec to come along and shoot me down in flames is Simon Cunningham of Hammersmith, London. He tells me that I got the Goblin information in Starburst 74 "Almost right." Hey, thanks a lot!

According to Simon, I forgot *Notturna* (Cinevox, 1983, MDF 33.151). And Cinevox released *Dawn of the Dead* before Varese Sarabande, and *Suspiria* before the EMI pressing. I also forgot the Dario Argento compilation *I Films di Dario*

Argento (Cinevox, 1980, CIA 5009) — you're right, I did! Ooops!

Then, adding insult to injury, Cunningham has the nerve to say he's the world's biggest Goblin fan. Well, in the light of these omissions, maybe he's right. Thanks, Simon.

LITTLE SEEN ACTOR

A quickie from Paul Ottaway from Devizes. He wants to know what ever happened to Grant Williams, the star of *The Incredible Shrinking Man*. Guess he just shrank away to oblivion, Paul. He managed to appear in a couple of other fantastic films, like *The Monolith Monsters* (1957), *Leech Woman* (1960), *Brain of Blood* (1971) and *Doomsday* (1972). As far as I know he's still alive,

but whether he's still working or not I'll have to throw open to our (well-informed) readers. Paul also inquired about Linda Harrison, who appeared in *Planet of the Apes* and *Beneath the Planet of the Apes*. As far as I can tell, Paul, that was her only contribution to the genre. Not that I missed her over the years. Hardly Oscar material, eh?

THE LATE NIGEL GREEN

It looks like this month's column is turning into a "What ever happened to..." special. Tim Yeoman writes from Bristol to ask when actor Nigel Green died. Green was a stalwart veteran on many good British genre pictures. Born in 1924 he appeared in *Corridors of Blood* (1958), *Mysterious Island* (1961), *Jason and the Argonauts* (1963), *The Masque of the Red Death* (1964), *The Face of Fu Manchu* (1965), playing Nayland Smith opposite Chris Lee's Fu Manchu), *The Skull* (1965), *The Wrecking Crew* (1968) and *Countess Dracula* (1972). Green died in 1972.

TEE "V" SERIES

Finally for this month, we've had lots of requests in the wake of our special "V" issue of Starburst to publish details of the forthcoming TV series follow-up. Like, when's it on, who's in it and so on. While I have little success predicting the whims of Britain's erratic television scheduling, I can confirm that the series is in the can. There's a very good chance it will be aired in the UK, very likely by the commercial network who had such a success with the mini-series. The big news is that one of the top-lined stars of the show is none other than the great Sybil Danning (pictured opposite on the "V" set). Departing editor McKenzie tells me to point out that Starburst will be running the definitive Sybil Danning interview, with lots of great (his word) pictures in the New Year. So be here! That's all, folks.



Ralph Bates gets cross with Yutte Stensgaard as the vampiric Mircalla in Hammer's *Lust for a Vampire* (1971).



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IN**





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HE'LL BE SORRY HE ASKED...